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LIFE-HEROES.
BY FRANK M. IMBRIE.
Yes, the intense, sweet dream is gone, is over;
I've burst away from Passion's maddening thrill;
Once more I stand a pure and perfect woman,
Tried, proven; tempted, yet all stainless still.
'Twas hard to bid his fierce, unyielding nature
Drunk with passion love in chary, tiny sips;
'Twas harder still, the one he madly worshipped,
Should dash the chalice brimming from his lips.
'Tis easy, too, in life's eventful battle,
Untried, to act the blameless, sinless part;
But, oh, so hard, to coldly chide the erring
When error comes not from a wicked heart.
'Tis sad to note the keen, brief joy-pulsations
When Passion, wave-like, leaves the being o'er,
So sad to witness the remorse-filled hours
That blast the tried soul to its tenderest core.
'Tis true, we talk of insult, deeply stinging;
Assume high traits; scorn the tempter's plea;
Oh, man, is that our life's ennobling mission—
Or, Christ-like, help the shackled—tempted, free?
I know, in years to come, the sweet soul vision
Will come to him, when I, a firm friend stood,
While baffling yearning's dangerous syren-pleading,
R-stored his faith in perfect womanhood.

The Silver Serpent:
OR,
THE MYSTERY OF WILLOWOLD.
BY A. P. MORRIS, JR.,
AUTHOR OF "YOL," "STEALING A HEART," "IRON AND GOLD," "FRANK OF PEARS," "RED SCORPION," "REVENUES, THE HUNCHBACK," "FLAMING TALESMAN," "CAT AND TIGER," ETC.

CHAPTER I.
THE CORNER IN THE STORM.
A LARGE house near a straight, smooth road, approached by a narrow carriage-way beneath tall trees.
It was night—a stormy night in the month of August; lightning flashing, thunder booming, and rain falling in drenching sheets, while the warring winds howled and shrieked as the gale swept on.
An aged woman sat in the brilliant parlor, listening, anon, to the fierce roaring without, and knitting vigorously on a pair of stockings. Crouched on stools by her side, were two handsome children—a boy and girl—each with hair of gold and eyes of brown.
"Hark, how it blows! It's a fearful storm. Don't be afraid of the thunder, dears. How the trees are bending and straining now!—hear them crack. But, there's no danger for such innocents as you. Don't tremble."
"Can papa and mamma be out in it?" queried the boy, hugging closer to her knees.
"No, I guess not. They're safe housed, be sure. But, I'm afraid they won't be home till late. Ha! what's that?"
"I thought I heard wheels," the boy whispered.
A step on the porch startled her. Then there was a loud knock on the door.
"That's not papa!" exclaimed the youthful pair.
"No. Let us see."
She arose to answer the summons. A chill blast—chill even in that summer month—soughed in as she opened the door; and on the threshold, just discernible in the gloom, stood the figure of a man.
"Your pardon, madam," spoke a deep voice; "I am drenched and tired. Can I find a resting-place here?"
"Yes. Come in—come in. Don't stand in the rain."
"I am nearly drowned!" he declared, stepping in.
He threw aside his hat and cape, and, stalking into the parlor, drew a chair up to the glowing hearth.
"A fire to dry oneself by isn't handy such a night," said the woman, returning after re-bolting the door.
"Welcome enough," he acquiesced, briefly. "Are you mistress of the house?"
"No, no, I'm but a nurse for these two children. Colonel Paul Gregor and his wife went to town to-day, and I'm alone."
"Good."
"Oh?"
"What a flood!"—jerking his thumb over his shoulder.
"Yes, it's a great rain. They may not be back this night on account of it. Ha!—what a flash that was." She clapped her hands to her eyes as a stream of lightning fairly danced around them, making dim the light of the lamp.
Even the man started with a thrill of fear.
"Nurse! Nurse!" cried the children, together, as they nestled to her with pallid faces and trembling forms.
"Hush!"—soothingly. "Don't be frightened, dears—don't be frightened."
"Be brave, little ones," said the stranger; but his voice contained no assurance, for it was deep almost to harshness.
Then broke the terrific peal of thunder outside. The electric shaft had riven a stately oak not a hundred yards from the house, and the report that followed the flash shook the building to its foundations.
Let us look at this stranger.
He was tall and slender—not thin, but lithe, supple, elastic. His face was singularly white, with a complexion pure as a woman's. The eyes were dark, hard, glittering, yet, without their piercing glance, at times wandering absently—like twin sparks that glow and smolder alternately. From the sharp-angled cheeks grew side whiskers of glossy black, plant as fibrous wire, for they were twined downward to long points. His hands were slim, effeminate, pink-nailed; on one finger he wore a curious and costly ring—and this ring flashed and shone as he slowly worked and rubbed his hands entwiningly, rested his elbows on the chair-arms, and stretched his long limbs, with their narrow, pointed shoes, before the fire. His tone of speech, like the changefulness of his gaze, was first agreeable, then repellent, next indefinable, finally thoughtful. The index to



At that instant a face appeared at the window, with two large staring eyes that fixed on Crosier.

his character was his countenance: now sly, presently stern, at one moment blank, and again varying namelessly.
The storm howled on. Nurse Mary resumed her seat and her knitting, and the stranger maintained a moody silence. The boy and girl regarded him distrustfully—two pair of eyes watching with instinctive dislike.
"Have you come very far, sir?" she inquired, at length.
"Yes. I was told, at a tavern some distance back, that the city lay but a mile beyond this place. I tried to reach it ere the storm broke."
"Ah! you came from the west."
"Maybe. I don't know west from east in such blackness."
"And you came, perhaps, from—"
"From the railroad station; choosing, rather, to take a short cut than wait for connection at the city suburbs," and he glanced covertly at her, to note whether the explanation was satisfactory.
"So, you passed through the pines—through that dismal path."
"Dismal it is—yes: a crooked road, and one that would be dark at noonday. What a favorable spot for assassins to lurk in!—and how easy to conceal there the body of a dead man. Ugh!" He looked toward her again from the corners of his eyes, and perceived that she shuddered, as if with a momentary chill.
"Was it very dark?"
"It made me quicken my footsteps; and once, I fancied I could hear the hiss of serpents at my heels, or the soft tread of a prowler tracking me with a drawn knife. I fancied it, I say; but, 'sblood! it was so real that I have no wish to try it again."
"Had you heard snakes?" questionedly.
"I was frightened, and thought so."
"Did you see anything when you left the edge of the pines and struck the main road?"
"I looked neither to the right nor to the left; but I might have seen, for then the clouds were not over the moon."
"You did not see Willowold?"
"Willowold?" he repeated, thoughtfully, pursuing in a careless way, though the dark orbs were sparkling with interest. "What is Willowold?"
"A monument of crime!" she answered, in a hushed strain.
"Oh! It is a house, then?" and brighter scintillated the cunning eyes.
"It was," nurse Mary emphasized, in a voice that sunk lower. "It was a house, but it now stands in grim ruins—dashed to pieces, they say, by just such a storm as this one of to-night."
"Sblood!" half aloud; and then: "This hurricane is sweeping every thing. The rain increases. But why do you ask me if I saw Willowold?"
She shook her head mysteriously.
"It's an evil place, sir."
"Some wonderful story, eh?" exclaimed the dark stranger, wheeling his chair around.
"Yes."
"Pray, madam, can it be possible that you have a specter-haunted ruins so close? What? Are you not afraid?—and on such a night?"
Were I a dead man I'd rouse while this storm lasts. Ugh! shivering, with his glance turned incredulously on her.
"It stands to the right of the road, as you come out of the pines."
"Had I known it, I should have run. I am a miserable coward in superstition."
"It was once a grand place, surrounded by flowers and fair groves, and finished inside like a palace—inhabited by a father, a mother and a daughter. They brought their furniture from no ordinary town, and the whole was more like a castle than a simple residence."
"So?"
"But that was when I was a young wife myself—about ten years ago. The building has high topped down in the rot and rack of weather; and an evil fate seemed to settle on it, for the trees have died to barren boughs, and only rank weeds grow where the flowers once bloomed."
Her knitting lay idly in her lap; she was leaning slightly forward, and speaking as if awed by her own earnestness.
"Interesting!" enunciated the man, briefly, giving his chair a hitch nigher. "Tell me more about this, madam."
His face affected blank wonderment; but there was an unmistakable keenness about the twinkling eyes that might have betrayed to another more suspicious than she an important attention.
"You've never been here, I judge, else you'd know the whole story."
"No. I come from a distant city. My name is Varian Crosier—by profession a lawyer. Do not let me interrupt you. You were telling me of Willowold, or began, which is the same. Did you know the names of the parties living there when this happened, whatever it was—if anything happened at all?"
"Willie De Martine and his wife, and their lovely daughter, Elise."
"Ah! lovely Elise," broke in the stranger, meditatively. "Go on."
"They were a peculiar family."
"Yes—peculiar. And the crime?"
"Some say it was crime, but there was no proof, so nothing was done."
"Um! Very natural. How can there be reasonable belief in crime, unless it is proven?"
"Others were superstitious. They called it a judgment."
"But you have not named this crime, if it was crime."
"Murder!" whispered the old lady.
"Sblood!" he exclaimed, for the third time, and much to the dislike of the nurse. But she was not altogether unused to strong expressions, as will be shown shortly, hence it passed with less notice than might have been expected.
"Really, madam," continued Varian Crosier, rapidly, and shrugging his shoulders, "it is cheerful to be near frightened to death out in the storm, and then hear a tale of murder when one reaches shelter! Ugh! But, go on; I am anxious. What about the mystery of Willowold?"
At that instant a face appeared at the window, with two large staring eyes that fixed on Crosier, cause it was behind her, nor by the children, who were dozing with their heads on her knees. It was plainly visible to him, as he sat fronting in that direction, and he answered, by a nod, the quick sign of a waving hand, that shook beside the face which pressed the pines.
His worm-like brows knit in a momentary frown; but the movement and the frown were also unobserved by the woman, who happened just then to glance at the clock on the mantelpiece.
"Elise De Martine," replied she, to Crosier's question, "had a lover."
"Oh, she had a lover! Then she was like other women?"
"This lover was not, according to the opinion of her parents, worthy of her."
"I am listening," with another hitch of the chair.
He smoothed his pointed nose, angled his palms, and regarded her over the tips of his white fingers.
And there were many other good people who agreed with Willie De Martine and his wife; for, you must know, the lover of Elise was but a poor apothecary's clerk, while she, the sweetheart, could count her thousands.
"Rich and beautiful!" commented he. "Who can blame the apothecary's clerk?—whose name was—"
"Jules Willowghby."
"Um! The interest increases. She eloped with him."
"They did not. It was their plan, but it was prevented by the sudden death of Elise De Martine."
"Ah! she died. How unfortunate for the hopes of Jules Willowghby!"
"That is the question: did she die, or was she murdered?"
"Oh, that is the rub, eh? What were the circumstances?"
"It was arranged that she should retire at the usual hour. At precisely three in the morning he would have a carriage at the roadside, to bear her away."
"Romantic! So Jules Willowghby carried off the body of a dead woman?"
"No—no—" impatiently.
"But she died during the night?"
"Died or was murdered. She was found upon her couch next morning—a corpse."
"Ugh!" with a shudder.
Again the face appeared at the window, and again Varian Crosier replied to the motioning hand by a jerky nod. In his mind he muttered: "Sblood! He won't wait—the dog! He don't like the wetting. If he looks in again I shall make his bones rattle when I lay hold on him—ha! see him!"
The face was there—a sickly face with wide eyes; and Crosier glanced and frowned at it in a manner that plainly meant:
"Begone, or I'll strangle you sometime. Out of sight, you rascal!"
His look must have been understood, for the object vanished.
"But hear the cause,"
"Oh! the cause. You know the cause. I open my ears," he exclaimed, a little wildly, as

his eyes wandered varyingly to the window in a feeling of annoyance.
"When they entered her apartment they saw a strange sight. She was straight and stiff on her back, and upon her breast was coiled a serpent."
"A live serpent!" cried Varian Crosier, in evident astonishment. "She was stung to death in her sleep by a snake!"
"Ah! that is the mystery. It was not alive; nor could it have been a snake at all, some said. No reptile like it had ever been seen in this country. It was horrible—its scales like shining silver; and when they undertook to sweep it from her body, with a stick, it crumbled away to nothing."
"Marvelous! A silver snake!" and he gasped like one overcome with amazement.
"De Martine and his wife buried their child with much grief, and then went away. Ever since that time the estate has been idle, and rumor says that the ruins are haunted by the ghost of Elise De Martine. Nobody will go near it."
"Now can you tell me what became of Willie De Martine, and his wife, Hortense? Where did they go to?"
"How did you know her name?" interrogated the nurse, sharply.
He was taken aback, but answered promptly, concealing his uneasiness at having spoken too hastily.
"Did you not tell me yourself?"
"Not that I remember. I don't think I did."
"You mentioned Willie De Martine and his wife, Hortense, with their beautiful daughter, Elise—Look there!" He pointed toward the doorway.
"She looked in the direction indicated."
"What is it?"
"I thought I saw a man walk past there in bare feet."
"That's hardly possible, sir. We've only one man about the premises—Thaddeus, the stable, and he's asleep in his loft, if there is sleep for him in such a blow."
"My mind, then," Crosier argued. "It is disturbed by this tale."
But Varian Crosier had an object in drawing the woman's attention to the door and the dark passage beyond. No sooner did she glance that way than he clenched one fist and shook it, with a gesture of fury, at the window behind her—at the face behind the window, for it was there again, dripping with wet, staring, and wearing a beseeching expression.
"I shall dart after him presently!" he snarled, within, while his lips drew back, his whiskers stood out, his teeth grated, and his orbs blazed.
Then, when it was gone, and ere she discovered him: "I want to know what became of the man and wife? Zounds! what became of Jules Willowghby, the apothecary's clerk?"
"They were never seen after leaving Willowold."
"Were not, eh?" twirling his whiskers to fine points as he eyed her.
"Jules Willowghby hasn't been heard of either. And now I think of it, the apothecary who employed him closed his store and disappeared somewhere about the same date."
"Did you ever see these people?" asked Crosier, now devoting both hands to one side of his whiskers, and twirling ardently on it, as he screwed up his mouth, elevated his brows, and gazed stantly over one wrist.
"Well, no, not exactly. But I lived near by in the county, and heard so much that I'd know them the minute I set eyes on them."
"Oh! you are sure of that?" shifting the working fingers to the hair on the opposite cheek, and crossing his limbs. "You could identify this Willie De Martine and his wife if you met them? Good. Maybe you will see them one of these days."
"I should not care to. If there's any truth in rumor, he was a bad man."
"But you forgot to tell me something," Crosier suggested, reversing his crossed limbs and proceeding to crack his knuckles one by one. "You say that the beautiful Elise was rich?"
"Very, very rich. And it was all her own—money in bank, best of all, which was left by two grandfathers successively."
"Zounds! how convenient to boast of rich grandparents! But the point. If Elise De Martine was an heiress in her own right—and she died by the sting of a serpent, which was no serpent, but a reptile of silver that crumbled at the touch of a stick—then where did her money go? Hey? Can you tell me that?"
"I never thought of it."
"Had she no one to leave her money to?"
"It seems to me the wills of both grandfathers constituted Willie De Martine guardian of the funds, or something of that kind."
"Then he fell possessor of all?"
"It may be so."
"It may be so!"—'sblood! how else could it be? leaning forward with elbows on his knees, hands extended, and tapping the forefinger of one member on the palm of the other, emphasizing. "It could not be otherwise. Everybody loves money—you do, I do, your stables, those children, then why not Willie De Martine and his wife? He must have loved money, and you tell me that he was a bad man. Was it not an object to obtain the wealth of Elise De Martine? Might it not have been a fight between the father and the lover—this Jules Willowghby, the apothecary's clerk, in which Jules Willowghby lost the prize, and Elise lost her life? Ha! curse that rascal!"
The demeanor of Varian Crosier had altered wonderfully. He appeared to be excited in the subject of their conversation. His glittering eyes fired and danced; he slid forward to the extreme edge of the chair, half-glaring at the surprised nurse, and timing his rapid speech by the finger that tapped so rapidly on the palm.
As he uttered the closing exclamation, he sprung from the chair, and took three or four strides along the carpet, to hide the angry scowl occasioned by another sight of the face at the window.

He recovered himself in the passage of a moment, however, and said:

"Pardon. That tale of yours has affected me. I told you I was a coward in superstition. Let it rest. We'll speak of other matters. You see, I am thrown on your hospitality for the night. I have had a weary tramp. If you can spare me a room, I may thank you in the morning, when I will also see the master and mistress of the house—Colonel Paul Gregor, I heard you call him."

"He was colonel in the Regulars. Yes; of course you can't go on in the storm. Shall I make you a cup of tea, sir?"

"No tea; I never drink it," somewhat shortly, and in that deep tone, "I have something better in my valise, which I threw down at the porch. I'll get it."

He went out to the porch, where he had cast down a small valise before entering the house. Grasping up the article, he did not immediately return.

"Hist, there, captain!" called a low, squeaky voice.

"Wynder, you dog!" he answered, advancing to the steps of the porch.

"Here I am, captain. Truly yours. Have some mercy; you don't know what a ducking I've had."

"Worth Wynder, you are a fool!"

"I know that, captain," and a vivid lightning flash, just then discovered this second personage making a bow with his words, a pantomime slightly ridiculous there in the pouring rain.

"Why did you annoy me by looking through that window so often? I shall break your neck on some occasion when you anger me."

"Then I shall not be disappointed, for I am expecting it."

"Hush! Speak lower, rascal!"

"But I say, how long are you going to keep me here? It's devilish wet. I've been twice to the flask in your valise, but it didn't make me the more waterproof."

"Sh, sh!"

Varian Crosier heard the nurse speaking to the children.

"Wait a minute, dears, while I go with this gentleman and show him a bed. I'll be back directly."

"Wynder, your ear—quick! Follow the light as it goes up stairs. You can tell my room by the rays from the window. Be beneath with your ladder, and all will go well. Fail me, and I'll fail you."

"Depend upon me, captain. I'll follow the light," interrupted the figure.

Crosier rejoined the woman, and was conducted to a comfortable apartment in the second story of the house. He thanked her, bade her good-night, and was alone.

As she returned to the children, she thought she heard some one laugh—then a whistle, then a sound like the murmur of voices. But she attributed it to the wind, and seated herself once more near the hearth, on which blazed and crackled a fresh log.

"Are you going to sit up for papa and mamma?" asked the boy.

"Yes, child. If they come home to-night they'll want a bite and a sup. The storm's going down now, and maybe they'll be here. What was that?"

With the last words she started and gazed suspiciously toward the murky hallway. She heard a noise resembling the fall of a window-sash—and again that mysterious murmur, presently followed by a draught of air that smelled of the cold and damp of the night.

She arose, took up the lamp, went to the door, and stood for a few seconds in a listening attitude.

"Only the wind beneath the door," she thought; only the gale in the trees, and the rumble of the thunder. I feel strangely, though; as if all wasn't right. That man did not wear a pleasant face; it reminded me of the snake, the fox, and the wolf—all in one. I hope he means no harm. It is possible. Pshaw! am I growing foolish? Mary Dyle was not silly in her younger years." Then to the children: "Do you want to go to bed, dears?"

"Not till papa and mamma come," they answered.

"Come, lay your heads in my lap, then, and go to sleep."

The knitting-needles plied their task, and a drowsy atmosphere settled round them.

The children reposed calmly. The tempest was lulling; the thunder rolled gradually further off, and its hoarse, dull booming did not break the awesome spell that drew over them.

CHAPTER II.

THE STRUGGLE ON THE ROAD.

VARIAN CROSIER was not the only one who had been overtaken by the torrent of the storm.

About two miles up the road—whirling through the rivers of mud, reckless of danger in the almost impenetrable blackness—a buggy was coming, at a furious rate; horse-hoofs clattering in and flinging the slush, and the animals flying like white specters in the tempest.

Inside the buggy, behind a high drawn water-dash, which hardly shielded them from the pelting rain, sat a lady and gentleman, rigid, silent, intent upon their speed and the desire to gain shelter. Over the top of the dash he used the slender carriage-whip, whenever the lightning illumined their surrounding, and the occasional glare was his only opportunity for seeing his course in advance.

But the flaming skies, nor the belching thunder, nor the roar of rain and wind, were not the sole absorbers of the man's mind; neither did the form of the woman—as it shrank in a terrified embrace to him—seem to enlist his notice. There were thoughts in his brain that burned and worried him much, which will be developed in due time.

On, on they went. At the end of a mile, the road ran beneath a dome of verdure—trees that bordered the side with high branches looked and interlaced in luxury, rendering more chaotic, if possible, the inkiness of the night.

Faster they sped. Again the whip stretched out, and snapped on the backs of the beasts; and tighter clung the lady round his neck.

"Unloose me," he snarled, with an effort to shake her off.

"Oh, Paul! Paul! it is terrible. I shall die of fright."

"Hands off, I say! How can I drive with a frightened woman hanging and whining on my neck? Ha! that was a bright flash!"

The lady screamed, as a blinding light played about them, followed quickly by a peal of deafening thunder—like a cannon report, or the clash of a thousand cymbals in their ears.

"Curse the horses! Why don't they get along!"

His companion trembled. He could feel her shivering as with an ague. Though the horses were goaded and galloping like runaway steeds he cursed their slowness, and plied the whip vigorously, while those burning thoughts grew hotter and hotter in his brain.

A quarter of a mile—half a mile—on, on at that fearful pace; a pace more hazardous than the peril from lightning or toppling trees. Timbers were falling in the woody depths; they could hear the crunch of splintered boughs amid the surge of elements; they knew not at

what moment some massive trunk might be riven and cast upon them, to crush, mutilate and destroy them.

Suddenly the man, who was watching keenly ahead to avail himself of the brief lightning flares, uttered a whining curse. He took a fierce turn on the reins, and held back with all his strength, sawing on the bits.

"What is it, Paul? What is the matter?"

"The horses won't stop! We—shall be dashed—to pieces! Watch for the lightning; then look. See!"

He pulled and strained on the reins, gasping the words with a difficult breath. There was a fresh danger at their front—a tree that lay directly in their path, the shadowy pile reared and defined anon, on the faint, far opening of the aisle. His alert eyes had caught a glimpse of it; a monstrous barrier, toward which they were running with ungovernable velocity, and on which they would be thrown, with disastrous consequences, unless they halted at once, which seemed impossible.

"What is that, Paul? Stop!—stop! we are riding into it!" she panted, in alarm.

"Stop!—yes. Perdition! I cannot stop. They are mad, and running away with us. Ha! we are on it! Perhaps we shall be killed—"

He cut short his speech by a curdling oath; the woman uttered a loud, chilling shriek.

Into the debris, over trunk and boughs, and amid the leaves they went—horses, buggy, occupants, all in a mass of confusion and horror, tumbling, crashing, struggling among tangled traces, twisted harness, shattered wheels, and iron hoofs kicking, pawing, tearing desperately.

The heavens lit up at the moment of the catastrophe, unmasking a blood-chilling spectacle.

But it was past in a second. The beasts, affrighted by the accident, stood quivering like the leaves that swayed in the tempest; and out of the mass of destruction crawled a bruised and bleeding figure.

"Amelia," cried the voice of the man, as he staggered to his feet and clutched the side of the overturned buggy: "Amelia, I say! Ha, there!—speak. Are you hurt?"

"Paul. Where are you, Paul?" came a wail in answer, half drowned by the storm, and issuing from underneath the buggy top.

"Here! Then you are not dead."

"Alive yet. Heaven be praised! But I am helpless. Get me out, Paul—get me out. I am wedged in and smothering. Quick!"

"Patience! I must extricate the horses before I can aid you. If they move so much as a muscle, it is your doom. How passive they are. You are lucky."

"Oh, Paul, I shall die in here! Make haste."

"Courage, I am coming."

He led out the frightened brutes from their uncomfortable positions, after much trouble, and being compelled to unbuckle the harnessing. It was a task occupying some time; and while he was thus engaged, the woman called continually for help and bewailed the situation, vexing him with her impatient cries, which rose above the din of the thunder, the whistle of the gale, and the heavy patter of rain from the dome of trees.

"Silence, there!" he screamed. "I am hastening all I can. There is noise enough without your squalls. I think the storm is slackening."

"Paul! Paul! how much longer? You are merciless!"

"Perdition, woman! I be still."

"But I shall smother to death!"

"And I cannot prevent it. Wait till I get this fellow out"—working and tugging with his head dangerously near the iron heels.

"What an infernal mess it is! So. Now, then, I'll do for you."

"Come quick, Paul. Oh! that terrible lightning!"

"We'll find it welcome enough to pick our own way home by. Curse this accident."

"How are we to go on, Paul? We are completely wrecked."

"With our feet. How else—unless you can ride without a saddle. Now I am reaching you. Patience."

He had his shoulder to one of the wheels, and was raising the light vehicle with his enormous strength.

"Now, where are you?" he demanded, when an opening was effected.

Her voice was silenced. He heard a low groan, and then there was stillness in the depth of rubbish.

"Perdition! She has fainted!"

He stretched in and grasped the motionless form, drawing it clear of the heap. It was a heavy burden. She had swooned, perhaps in her fright, perhaps in the pain of some injury.

"Ha! as I thought. Rouse up here. Be alive. How are you hurt?"

But there was no reply. Snarling a savage oath, he dragged her to one side, holding her face up to the wash of the rain.

"It will revive her. Maledictions on this predicament! Is she dead?—no, her heart flutters. Amelia! Rouse, I say! What a time for fainting! Do you hear me? It is I, Paul Gregor, your husband. Will you never come to yourself? Not dead, but badly scared. She trembles—a sure sign—"

Ere he finished he started back with a cry of mingled surprise and fear. A heavy hand fell on him, the fingers of which twined in his collar, and the gripe of which was fierce and vise-like.

He was attacked, but he could not see the foe. Darkness was all; and an invisible enemy grappling at his throat.

"Ho, there! Villain! Highwayman! hands off! What's this? Curse you! Ha!"

"I have you at last—murderer!" rung an edged voice in the wind.

"Perdition! I know you, Jules Willoughby!"

"Ay, Jules Willoughby!" echoed the foe, twining round him.

"Let go, I say, or I'll be your death! Villain, take that!"

Colonel Paul Gregor was a powerful man, and not a coward. The unexpected assault startled him at first, but, in the brief moment of dialogue in which he recognized and hallooed the name of Jules Willoughby, the object of whose assault was evident—he braced himself sternly and with prompt action. The form of the woman slid from his arms to the ground; he groped quickly outward and fastened on his unseen adversary. Simultaneously, he felt a sharp agony in the shoulder, and knew, by the cold sensation accompanying it, that he had been struck with a knife.

Were it not for the darkness, the blow might have been truer. The wound smarted and angered him, but was not fatal.

"Assassin! you have stabbed me. Take that from me, Jules Willoughby!"

With one hand he clung to his antagonist, with the other, clenched to a fist of bony knobs, he hammered on the head he could not see. And struggling, coiling, slipping, hither went the combatants—one intent upon destroying, and one nerved by the effort at self-preservation, stimulated by the fire of hatred, surprise, fear, and a knowledge of the actual peril.

"This time, I shall kill you, Jules Willoughby! You escaped, did you? Ha! curse that knife!"

He caught the weapon by the hilt, as it pricked him again, and wrenched it away.

At the same time, this savage foe released himself and darted out of reach.

"Paul! Paul! where are you?" screamed the woman, who was just recovering.

He was bounding in pursuit, but checked himself, and hurried to her side.

"So you are awake at last?"

"What does this mean? Did I swoon? Where have you been?"

"You swooned; and I have had a combat," growled he, feeling for her and assisting her to rise.

"A combat, Paul? With what?—with whom?"

"I was attacked by a ruffian—"

"And left me lying in the filth?"

"Perdition! was I to hold you, and be assassinated meantime? You are too choice. Hark ye: I have had a wrestle with—who do you imagine?"

"How can I guess?"

"With Jules Willoughby!" He announced it with a shiver.

"Jules Willoughby?" she exclaimed. "Not impossible! He is dead!" and but for the murk that shrouded them, her white face might have been seen to grow still whiter. There were lines of dread about her mouth, and a restless stare in her eyes, which told that she as well as Colonel Paul Gregor, was preyed upon by the presence of Jules Willoughby—spoken of as an apothecary's clerk, and the former lover of deceased Elise De Martine, in our previous chapter.

Showing that there was something between Colonel Gregor and his wife and Jules Willoughby—something which alarmed them in connection with his unexpected appearance, or, rather, his presence without his appearance, and the significance of his attacking them under cover of the storm.

"Jules Willoughby is not dead—a thousand anathemas on him!" declared Colonel Paul Gregor, with his teeth set. "He is alive. I fought with him, and have the marks of his knife in my shoulder, this minute. Ha! did you hear?"

It was a shout from the defeated assailer. It penetrated to their ears as if coming from a great distance; but it was distinct, piercing, threatening, and the words of the shout were: "Beware, murderer! Beware! You are not yet safe!"

"Do you hear that?" cried Gregor; "are you satisfied? Do you know the voice? Devils—did you ever hear those very words before? 'Beware, murderer! Beware!'"

"It is Jules Willoughby!" she gasped.

He worked his fingers round her wrist in a painful hold, and leaned down to try and see the face that was blanched, now, by a fear more gnawing than the terrors of the storm.

"Yes, it is he. He calls me murderer now as he did then—ten years ago; when, instead of murder, we saved a life. How did he escape the power of Alick Cassin? Curse Alick Cassin! But we'll answer this question and attend to Jules Willoughby, at another time. We are standing in the rain, like a pair of fools. Can you lead a horse? Then gripe this bridle, and come on. I shall have one arm free to be ready for the villain. He may try it again; and my pistols are unfortunately wet. Come, now."

Making their way around the fallen tree, they plodded through the mud, each leading a horse. Twice and thrice Paul Gregor fancied some one skulking at his side, and he clenched his fist and ground his teeth together in desperate expectancy of another knife-thrust, or blow from a club, or sting of a bullet from an unseen source.

"Curse Jules Willoughby!" he blurted— and here he struck out furiously in the darkness, and the impulse of feeling that the object of his dread was there; "Curse Alick Cassin for his botchery!"—as his sweeping arm clove only the empty air; "Keep up there, Amelia. We shall be in a house, presently, and out of this slush. I am soaked to the skin. The storm is abating, I think. It grows less gloomy. There's a full moon on the other side of those clouds; I wish it would show itself. Ha! what shape was that?"—recoiling abruptly, and jerking the horse's head; then, proceeding forward once more: "Come on, Amelia, I say. Step faster!"

"I am coming," responded the woman, firmly. "But may it not be a mistake, Paul?—and we are uselessly frightened by a voice that, only by chance, resembles the voice of Jules Willoughby."

"Mistake? No, there is no mistake. His words have rung in my ears for ten years. 'Beware, murderer! Beware! Perdition! It was he. Hasten. We are most here. Yonder is our light—two lights: one up stairs, and one down. Mary is putting the children to bed.'"

The glimmer from a window in the second story was the ray of light from the lamp which the nurse had given to Varian Crosier.

As Colonel Paul Gregor fixed his gaze on the window he perceived that the light suddenly vanished, as if blown completely out—was gone a second—then reappeared. In the same moment, with like mysterious distinctness, the light on the first story also dimmed—then burned brilliantly. It was as if both lamps had been extinguished and relighted quickly, by a movement in concert, by some one below and some one above, the meaning of which was, at least, singular, if not an apparent signal for some purpose.

What can that mean?" he wondered. "Those lights at strange hours. Mary can't be up and down stairs in the same breath; and if the children are playing with the lamp, we shall have our house burned down! I am suspicious too, to-night. Hasten. Did you see that? The devil—both lights again! They went out together! Faster, Amelia!"

No lights shone at all now; and with his wonderment increasing, he quickened his footsteps.

(To be continued.)

Gentleman George:

OR,
PARLOR, PRISON, STAGE AND STREET.

A STRANGE ROMANCE OF NEW YORK LIFE.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.

AUTHOR OF "THE MAN-FROM-TEXAS," "MAD DETECTIVE," "ROCKY MOUNTAIN BOY," "WOLF DEMON," "OVERLAND KID," "RED MAZEPPA," "ACE OF SPADES," "HEART OF YIPPEE," ETC.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SUPPER.

As the curtain touched the stage and the actress rose from the mimic couch of death, whereon the Indian girl had yielded up her life to the deadly bullet of the Spanish commandante, she found Medham awaiting her at the wing.

He followed the exhausted girl to her dressing-room where the negress was in attendance. Miss Desmond sunk down breathlessly into a chair.

"Splendid!" exclaimed Medham, enthusiastically. "I never saw you act better than you did to-night. We'll get 'em to-morrow night."

I wouldn't take fifteen hundred dollars cash down for the house this minute. Don't you remember, I told you when you were playing in those beastly little one-horse towns, to fifty dollars a night, that the time would come when we'd pull 'em to the tune of a thousand? and after this engagement we can sweep the whole country, my dear; these donkeys of managers will change their note now. I tell you what it is, loveliest of your sex, there's nothing in this world so successful as success."

"Oh, I am tired," the actress murmured, as she removed the raven wig from her head, exposing her own golden tresses.

"Palmer is delighted; he declared that business will be still better next week. He's going to put out two thousand extra sheets of printing Saturday night, and I've engaged three men to go and chalk your name on the pavements all over the city, so that when New York wakes up Sunday morning it will see nothing but the name Desmond staring them in the face."

The lip of the actress curled in contempt.

"If I am as talented and attractive as they say I am, I do not see why the people will not come to see me without all this advertising."

"You've got to do it, my dear; you can't hide your light under a bushel, now-a-days, and expect people to see it. Placard on every dead wall, and in every newspaper, that Miss Ellen Desmond is the greatest actress that ever was or ever will be, and two-thirds of the people who come into the theater, and pay for coming, will be perfectly satisfied that she is, before the curtain goes up and they see her at all. The people who pay come to be amused, and it doesn't take much to please them, either; and as for the critics, they are a set of donkeys who wouldn't know good acting if they saw it."

Miss Desmond laughed; she knew the business manager's contempt for the men whom he so cleverly used to advance his own interests.

"Well, I'll say what I came to say, and then get out and let you dress," continued Medham.

"Mr. Palmer presents his compliments to you and would like to have the pleasure of your company at a little supper as soon as you are ready; and he would like also to present to you an esteemed friend of his, Judge Bruyn, if you have no objections."

The eyes of the actress flashed, and the hot breath came quick and strong from the parted lips.

"The Judge will make one of the party, then?" she asked.

"Yes; there will only be Palmer, the Judge, and myself."

"I will go, of course!" she exclaimed, with quick decision.

"I tell you it's a clear case," and Medham winked at the actress. "If you play your cards well, it will be the most successful engagement of your life."

"Do you think so?"

Absently she spoke, and the fair brow was clouded over with thought.

Little did the business agent, Almer Medham, know in regard to the past life of the actress, Ellen Desmond.

"I'll tell Palmer that you will come as soon as you are dressed. Do you want the carriage to go home in? You can have it as well as not."

Medham addressed the negress.

"No, thank you, Massa Medham; I'd rather walk," the servant replied.

"All right; I'll send the carriage off, then. The Judge has his own vehicle outside, two stunning blacks, gold-mounted harness, and all that sort of thing. I'll tell Palmer that you'll go and then come back after you."

Medham withdrew. With the assistance of the negress, Miss Desmond proceeded to dress in her beautiful Indian dress and array herself in a walking-garb. Plain and dark was the suit, a somber contrast to her own bright beauty.

Dressed within fifteen minutes from the time that Medham had left, on opening the door of her dressing-room, she found that that gentleman was in attendance.

Together the two proceeded through the now deserted theater to the front of the house, where the manager and the Judge were waiting in the vestibule.

With the urbane gallantry so characteristic of him, the manager introduced the actress to Judge Bruyn.

Modestly, with quiet retirement, Miss Desmond acknowledged the Judge's expressions of pleasure at making her acquaintance.

And as the little party passed from the vestibule of the theater to the carriage in waiting, at the curbstone, the Judge got a good look at the features of the actress. If Miss Desmond had appeared beautiful on the stage, amid the glare of the gas and the illusion of the surroundings, she looked fully as pretty in the dim light shining from the gas-lamps of the street, and clad as she was now in a simple walking-dress, unrelieved even by a single gleam of color.

Only a few words of conversation were exchanged during the short ride to the famous restaurant.

But at the Maison Doree, in a private room, with a delightful supper spread upon the table, and the sparkling champagne passing freely, the ice of reserve soon melted away, and the conversation became general.

The actress, modest and retiring in her manner, charmed the Judge fully as much with her remarks as with her beauty. Wit and good sense were skillfully blended in the Miss Desmond conversation.

Bruyn felt that he was becoming deeply interested in the beautiful girl; there was a fascination about her which he could not understand. As he looked back over the record of his life he could not remember to have ever met a more charming woman.

And yet, strange to say, at the very moment that he was most enjoying the society of the beautiful and sensible girl, there came over him a peculiar sort of feeling; he could not understand it, could not explain it; could assign no reason for its coming, no reason for its stay. It was like a nervous sort of apprehension—not exactly of danger; in fact, he could not tell what he apprehended, and finally he made up his mind that he was jealous—jealous that any one else might attempt to claim the thoughts of the fair woman, whose face seemed like a truthful crystal mirror whereon faith and goodness alone could shine.

An hour of mirth and social chat, and the supper was ended.

As the party rose to depart, the Judge gallantly assisted Miss Desmond to don the light sack which she wore, and trusted that it would not be the last time that he should have the pleasure of meeting her.

With great modesty, Miss Desmond thanked the Judge for his kindness, whispered how grateful she was for his kindly words, but said no more.

Bruyn was disappointed; he expected that the actress would have invited him to call. Again he felt the strange sensation creep over him, and this time he was sure that it was jealousy.

As the party crossed the sidewalk to enter the carriage again, a man stalked so near the actress that he could have touched her.

The face of Miss Desmond turned pale, and her eyes flashed. The man was Neil Jemison, the "Doctor."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SATURDAY JOURNAL

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TWO SUPERB STORIES!

With this issue we give the opening chapters of

THE SILVER SERPENT;

OR,

The Mystery of Willowold.

BY A. P. MORRIS, JR.,

AUTHOR OF "THE RED KATAH," "THE SEA CAT,"

And shall, in a short time, commence:

WOLFGANG.

OR,

The Robber of the Rhine,

OR,

THE YOUNG KNIGHT OF THE CROSSIGORDE.

BY CAPT. FREDK. WHITTAKER,

AUTHOR OF "THE RED KATAH," "THE SEA CAT,"

"THE ROCK RIDER," ETC., ETC.

Each of their kind superb.

Mr. Morris' romance is of a strangely weird

and personally exciting nature—full of startling

situations, surprises and mysteries, yet withal a

love-story that holds the reader's closest attention

to the end.

Mr. Whittaker's fine scholarship is evident in

every page of this historic production. It is a

specimen of what a good historic novel should be

—true to the men and times which he introduces,

and yet as freely plotted in fancy and deed as if

it were wholly of the unreal domain of the imagination.

It is a novel that most readers will re-

read—which is to be said of but few "popular"

serials.

Our Arm-Chair.

Our idea,—"Young America," out in Har-

lem, writes a chatty letter about matters in

his district, telling how the SATURDAY JOURNAL

has circulated there by the force of its fine

stories, etc., etc. We are always pleased with

these pleasant words from readers, and though

we can not, of course, answer them, are none the

less their friend. It is one of the publisher's and

editor's most encouraging compensations to re-

ceive from patrons of the paper the evidence of

approval which everywhere greets the JOURNAL.

From all sections come these evidences. We are

rapidly taking a steadfast hold upon American

homes and enter for that free-land audience out

of which are to spring the future true men and

women of the Great Republic. The transient, flash

and dash audience is not ours; we make no over-

tures to the "fast" or dissipated creatures of so-

ciety; we pay no devoirs to folly and wickedness;

we offer no feast for those who crave forbidden

fruits; but, instead, we entertain, amuse, instruct

and delight by the pure work of pure pens, calling

to our aid authors who can be trusted; and, with a

faith in the principle that "the best now is the

best in the end," shall continue to "fight it out on

that line" always.

A Sea Monster.

In Mr. Whittaker's SATUR-

DAY JOURNAL serial, *The Sea Cat*, the reader is

introduced to an enormous cuttle-fish or sea devil

(octopus), whose existence is indeed no myth.

Readers of the romance may have thought, per-

haps, that the author used a "romancer's license"

in making the terrible creature large enough to

invade a ship's deck with its horrible arms, to

seize and drag overboard its prey, but that not less

so many parallels in the history of the sea that

the author might cite a score of authorities to de-

fend his delirium.

We have a verification of the power of this crea-

ture in the narrative of an experience, off the

coast of Newfoundland, near St. John's. It ap-

pears, from a letter written by the Rev. Mr. Har-

vey, of St. John's, Newfoundland, to Mr. Dawson,

Principal of McGill College, Montreal, that on the

26th of October, two fishermen who were out in a

small boat observed some object floating on the

water at a short distance, which they supposed

to be a sail or the debris of a wreck. On reaching

it one of the men struck it with his "gaff," when

immediately it showed signs of life and reared a

parrot-like head, which they said was as big as a

six-gallon keg, with which it struck the bottom

of the boat violently. It then shot out from

about its head two huge, livid arms, and began to

twine them round the boat. One of the men

seized a small ax and cut off both arms as they

lay over the gunwale, whereupon the fish backed

off to a considerable distance and ejected an im-

mense quantity of inky fluid, that darkened the

water for a great distance around.

The men saw it for a short time afterward, and

observed its tail in the air, which they thought to

be 10 feet across. They estimated the body to

be 60 feet in length and five feet in diameter, of

the same shape and color as the common squid,

and moving in the same way as the squid, both

backward and forward. One of the arms which

the men brought ashore was unfortunately de-

stroyed, but a clergyman who saw it assured Mr.

Harvey that it was ten inches in diameter and

six feet in length. The other arm had six feet of

its length cut off before leaving St. John's; the

remainder, which measured 13 feet in length, is

but three inches in circumference, except at the

extremity, where it broadens like an ear to six

inches in circumference.

As usual in the cuttle-fish, the under surface of

the extremity of the arm is covered with sucking

disks, the largest of which are an inch and a

quarter in diameter. The men estimated that

they left about 10 feet of the arm attached to the

body of the fish, which would make it about 35

feet long. A photograph of the fragments of the

arms and some of the disks were sent to Mr. Daw-

son, who exhibited them at the meeting of the

Montreal Natural History Society. A trustworth-

iness witness informed Mr. Harvey that in the

winter of 1870 the bodies of two cuttle-fishes were

cast ashore on the coast of Newfoundland, mea-

suring 40 and 45 feet respectively.

I WOULD'NT.

You've felt cross sometimes, now haven't

you? And your best friends have said or done

something that has not entirely agreed with

you, haven't they? In your heart you have

vowed vengeance, and have felt like an en-

raged tiger-cat or a pent-up volcano, and

thought you would give those same individuals

a bit of your mind. Now, I wouldn't do it;

no, indeed, I wouldn't, for it will not do you or

any one else the least particle of good. It is

really dreadful to think how many friendships

have been severed, and how many lives made

unhappy, by our ebullitions of temper. A

kind word is often the cause of gaining us

friends staunch and true, while a cross one has

lost us not only friends but has made us unhap-

py as well.

Instead of expending the vials of your wrath

on those who offend you, wouldn't it be

better if you were to go away all by your-

self, and write down all the good and evil

words said of you, and the good and evil deeds

done toward you by others? When you have

counted these all over you will find the good

will outweigh the evil; so throw the records

of the evil into the cooking-stove, but treasure

up the good in your heart; you'll feel far hap-

pier for so doing; but if you go on treasuring

up every trifle you will have a most miserable

time over it; and, while you are wondering

what it is that makes this world so cold and

dreadful, you are one of the very causes of its

being so. I wouldn't act in that manner, were

I in your place; friends are better than ene-

mies, any day; 'tis better to be loved than

hated; 'tis better to forgive than bear malice.

Am I not right?

"But, 'Eve,' when you come to think of

how one's goodness is so little cared for, and

how friends, whom you have done so much for,

have turned the cold shoulder on you, it isn't

quite so easy to carry your advice into prac-

tice."

But, you *mustn't* think of it; you must forget

it; you must firmly resolve that, from this

time forth and forevermore, you will banish

such thoughts from your mind. It is not going

to do you one particle of good to keep the idea

of man's ingratitude to man in your head.

Take a more cheerful view of life, its sur-

roundings, and of those who go to people the

world in which we live. Are we so good our-

selves, so free from censure, that we wonder

that others are not the same?

Ingratitude! Why, we are ungrateful our-

selves not to be willing to forgive and for-

get; when we have so much need of being for-

given ourselves, and have so many peevish-

nesses that we would like to have forgotten.

I heard Mrs. Jack say one day to tell Mrs.

Gill about it, for it would only bring about do-

mestic broils; nor by my repeating their gos-

sip would I be doing my duty. I don't like to

get into hot water, and I keep out of it just as

much as I possibly can. I don't want to be

drawn into quarrels, or have my name brought

in as a witness to any disturbances. Is there

nothing else to talk about but scandal? Are

we so utterly depraved and vile that our evil

doings are so much commented upon, and our

goodness never remarked on?

If I go visiting I want to hear sense and not

scandal—something edifying. I want the virtues

of my neighbors extolled and not their vices

brought before my vision. I wouldn't give

much for the society of a person who is a scan-

dal-monger, or one who believes that the surest

road to heaven is through Gossip's Lane.

They are so good themselves, in their own

estimation, that others look like carrion in

their eyes.

I was sitting at my desk the other day and a

rap came at my door. "Unluck the door,"

said a female voice outside; "I've got

just the nicest piece of gossip about—"

I waited to hear no more. I said I wouldn't

unlock my door to all the gossip and scandal in

the world; and I didn't and wouldn't.

EVE LAWLESS.

THE ENEMY OF ALL.

A TINY, pointed, poisoned weapon, which

strikes in the dark and unawares—malice.

The weapon of the slanderer and backbiter,

of the treacherous double-dealer who writes

himself friend and is the most dangerous of

enemies.

Oh, this deceit of appearance that fawns

upon us, that flatters us, that wins our con-

fidence only to betray us! Why cannot people

be true to the form in which God created them?

Why must they blot its purity, clad it with

flaming hypocrisy, make of it a whited

sepulcher by all uncleanliness within?

Malice starts a whisper from some basis,

false or true. Malice catches it, turns it, rolls

it in the dust, adds to it, and makes of it an

overwhelming ruin. One little dark spot upon

a man's character thus has been widened until

it has encompassed all his hopes, all his ex-

pectations, blasted his life, and who may tell

but the subtle influence reaching still further may

have sullied his chances for eternity.

Hate, honestly expressed, is seldom injurious.

All it asks is to be relieved from disagreeable

proximity with its object, or, if hostile contact

comes, gives the warning which permits de-

fense.

Malice, on the contrary, seeks to destroy.

The wisdom of the serpent and the innocence

of the dove are combined to conceal the evil

intent. A little prick with the poisoned point,

an insidious thrown out, an insinuation made,

and link after link of the chain of consequences

will follow, winding in and binding the victim,

who may never know

WHEN I AM DEAD.

BY EBBE E. HENFORD.

When I am covered with the grass,
If my low grave you chance to pass,
Oh, pause one moment, one, I pray,
And in that surely coming day,
Say, as you smell the pimpernel,
Here lieth one who loved me well.

You do not care for me, I know;
For pride you could not stoop so low;
One from your high and proud estate
With lowly lover could not mate.
But ah! when I am dead, I know
You'll think of him who loved you so.

And oh! I shall not be forgot!
You'll miss me, though you love me not.
Love is so sweet a memory
That though it came to you from me,
You'll think of it, and thrill to know
That one has lived who loved you so!

And when you pass my grave, and see
The blossoms bending for the bee,
And hear the south winds sighing mass
Like wandering friars, who chance to pass,
Or in some cup of pimpernel's
Oh, think of him who loved you well!

WILMA WILDE.

The Doctor's Ward:
OR,
THE INHERITANCE OF HATE.

BY MRS. JENNIE DAVIS BURTON.

AUTHOR OF "CORAL AND RUBY," "ADRIA, THE ADOPTEE,"
"THE CRUEL WIFE," "STAGNANT WIND," "CRUEL'S
DECEIT," "SEASIDE OF PLUM TREES,"
"THE FALSE WIDOW," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FOR THREE DAYS.

CRAYTON, tipped back in one of the leather-covered office-chairs, his heels in complacent familiarity with the banker's desk, was listening to the story of Wilma's disappearance, interspersed as it was by the banker's ejaculations of regret and annoyance, by no means grown less after three hours down town.

"Most inexplicable occurrence to my mind and very distressing to all of us," he said, passing his hand over his smooth face and rubbing his soft white palms together, with the aimless prosperity and so little disappointment in all the enterprises of all his smooth, well-regulated life left Howard Richland at a loss in meeting even this departure from the usual way. However Mr. Richland might endure greater trials should they come to him, he was perplexed and disturbed to a degree over this.

Crayton had looked in at the bank with the *sang froid* belonging to his class, the assurance which recognizes no inner scroll of any man's life sacred from intrusion. He greeted the banker with a careless nod and a good-morning.

"I haven't any one to interview," he said, "no reliable reporter to chronicle, and have left the commonplaces to the lesser lights of our ilk. How did you leave the ladies this morning, Mr. Richland. Let me hope Mrs. Richland's indisposition had no later continuance."

"It was but a passing faintness and did not recur," answered Mr. Richland, with his usual precision. "I left them both quite well though very much distressed. You are the very man I want to see, Crayton. Come in here and have a seat for a moment."

Crayton went in, nothing loth, to the inner office with its comfortable appointments, its walls of wood, its woodwork carved, its furniture solid heavy and plain, very careless over the mark of distinction this attention from the banker appeared.

"Mrs. Richland suggested consulting you," the banker went on, after making his first explanation, "and I remembered that you knew something of the person who is Wilma's guardian. For my part I am quite bewildered. They will ascertain at the house if Wilma has returned, and upon my word! I don't know what more you might do unless to suggest the best means of following her up without making the affair a matter of public comment."

"Count on me, proving good as an amateur detective," said the reporter, confidently. "A man who is in all sorts of places every day, and has had experience with all sorts of people, has a better chance of stumbling over mysteries than others who might set to work in a more methodical way. 'Pon honor, much as I appreciate the compliment conferred, I must declare that Mrs. Richland is a lady of decided penetration."

The two were sitting in consultation still when Lenoir was ushered in. Crayton catching a doubtful glance in his direction answered it with his usual unconcern.

"Don't mind me, I'm just lounging across to a window which overlooked the street, as apparently indifferent to the world without as to the two men within. Lenoir took him at his word. People in general had a habit of not minding Crayton so long as his duties did not lead him to interfere with them. Besides it was not Lenoir's mission to betray any of the confidence Captain Bernham had placed in him.

"I have come on private business," he said, "regarding Miss Wilde."

"Regarding Wilma? Have you heard of her, Mr. Lenoir?—what?"

"I am authorized with a message from Miss Wilde's father, Mr. Richland. An acquaintance I have recently made, Captain Leigh Bernham, who is stopping at the St. Clair now, is prepared to authenticate his claim in that capacity. He will give the best of references for your satisfaction and assurance of his responsibility. At his request I undertook to transmit his wishes, to inform you of his right, and to avoid, if possible, the tedious formalities of any legal process."

"Wilma's father! Upon my word, this is growing to be a complex affair. My dear fellow, are you sure there is no mistake about it? I certainly understood that Wilma was an orphan, without relatives of any degree."

It only needed this latest phase to disturb Mr. Richland's serenity to its greatest depths. "It was the general supposition, I believe. Some early misunderstanding effected a separation between Captain Bernham and his young wife; he was called away to duty upon the frontier, and received news a few months later of her death. Captain Bernham had unconsciously gained the enmity of his wife's father; their marriage had been a secret one, and he was never apprised of his daughter's existence. Accident and the testimony of an old servant recently revealed the truth to him. If any difficulty is put in the way of his claiming his daughter he is prepared to put the matter in the hands of a lawyer, but I trust there may be no difficulty when he presents his claim in proper form. He has heard of your extreme kindness to her, and believed it best to advise you in some such way as this, at the same time to spare Wilma the suddenness of the shock an abrupt statement might give her."

"But there is a difficulty," Mr. Richland asserted. "There, Lenoir, don't look as though you supposed we would throw an obstacle in the way of the child's good. She came to us almost under protest from her guardian. Crayton here can tell you more of him; I know him by name, merely, this Dr. Dallas who is

her responsible protector. I had hoped to succeed him if any change could be effected in regard to Wilma, but your strange story puts an end to that expectation, I suppose."

You think the difficulty apprehended will be in opposition from Dr. Dallas?"

"I know nothing whatever of that person, let me repeat. The difficulty lies in the fact that Wilma has deserted us, gone off in the most incomprehensible and inconsiderate manner. I am quite used-up between the surprise, first from her action, and now the later one of this revelation of yours."

And there the story of Wilma's disappearance was repeated again, and discussed with even more dissatisfaction on the banker's part than before. With no newer conjecture of what motive must have prompted her came the knowledge which promised additional disappointment for themselves, whatever it might portend favorably for Wilma. Mr. Richland would not selfishly have consigned Captain Leigh Bernham and his claim to oblivion if he readily could, but there was actual regret in his thought that Wilma was lost to the place in his home and heart which the lack of any child of his own had left unfilled.

Crayton, failing a little in his self-absorption, and finding nothing worthy of his attention in the familiar sights of the street, lounged back to his place by the banker's desk. He had picked up a pen and was scriawling idly over a sheet of blank paper lying there.

"I haven't an idea of how my wife and Ethel will take this added surprise," said Mr. Richland, as the young journalist rose. "Can't you spare time to come back with me, Lenoir? I am going back to the house directly. You, too, Crayton. What a relief it would prove on the top of all this perplexity to find that Wilma had really gone back to her guardian. Why, I say! How in the world did that ever get here?"

He had gone across to Crayton's back, and stood staring down at the scribbled sheet, torn in strips now and strewn over the desk, Crayton, pen in hand, scriawled over another line, Mr. Richland's amazed eyes following him.

"Upon my word, I never would have believed it if I had not seen for myself. It's the very face-simile of Gertrude's hand, the very shade and turn she gives her letters. Improbable as such an occurrence might be at any time, and impossible as it would have been at this particular time since I haven't been away from the place, it really struck me first that Gertrude must have been here and left a written message. Strange how very like. What is it you have written?—I, Rose, take thee, Robert?—was it Robert? No matter, of course. You must be acquainted with my wife's chirography to imitate it so perfectly."

"Never had the pleasure of seeing it that I am aware of, but I have rather a facility for running different styles. As for ladies' writing that always runs in the same groove, sloping and Italian, all hair lines and shades at the curves, a very little modification will suit the hand to any of the sex."

"Perhaps," Mr. Richland admitted, doubtfully. Crayton had deftly twirled the fragments of paper together, rolled them between his palms, and tossed the ball so made into the waste-basket. "You are both coming?"

"Sorry, but I have an engagement too near at hand. Lenoir here can bring back any news there may be to me."

Lenoir, approached near enough to overlook the little scene, darted a quick glance at the reporter's sallow, undemonstrative face. His keener eyes had read the fragment—"I, Rose, take thee, Robert?"—and he had instantly connected the names with the story he had so recently heard. What could Crayton know of it? Crayton's expression did not betray, and Lenoir very soon dismissed the speculation.

The reporter sauntered away in his solitary direction, and the other walked briskly through the streets back to the Western avenue mansion. No lessening of anxiety had occurred there during Mr. Richland's absence. Ethel had just returned from her drive in a nervous flutter until a sure that no tidings of Wilma had come. Dr. Dallas had been there and gone, so the hope that he had encouraged that she might have voluntarily returned to his care was ended.

That scene in the library had not gone beyond its four walls. Mrs. Richland had silently fainted in her chair, and Dr. Dallas, with his own unwearied patience, had waited the natural course of restoration. A little apprehension mingled with his waiting before it was quite over. His eye fell on a cut-glass flagon upon the mantel filled with some fragrant essence, and he took it down sprinkling the unconscious face liberally from its contents. As he observed signs of returning consciousness, he retreated to a window and half withdrew behind the falling drapery. This was through no consideration on the part of the man; it was simply the policy of supreme selfishness.

"Give her a moment to come thoroughly back to herself, to fully comprehend the force of the declaration I made, and there will be no useless scene, no hysteria or other excess of nervous agitation. Truly a woman with her amount of nerve should be a mark for the sex; I positively thought for a second that she was not going to give a sign. There's always a tender spot with even the sternest and coldest of them, however, and I flatter myself I have found that one in self-sufficient Madame Richland's vulnerable point."

He turned presently to meet the steady, dark eyes silently watching him.

"Oh, recovered," he said, advancing from his position within the shadow of the curtain. "And no bad effects from your late shock, let me hope. I see; not even occasion for me to prescribe. Believe me, I would willingly be of service in that way, if at all necessary. Permit me to felicitate you upon your wonderful powers of self-command, Mrs. Richland; but I recall you were noted for that rare virtue when you were *not* Mrs. Richland."

"There was a smoldering fire in those steady eyes now, a burning redness in the closed lids in vivid contrast with the still whiteness of the perfect face—a warning of surging, hidden passion-fires had Dr. Dallas rightly interpreted them. She neither noticed these later words of his nor made any reference to the weakness which had overtaken her."

"If that is true," she said, "why are you telling it to me now? Why are you not still keeping the secret which you have kept so well for seventeen years?"

"Perhaps that very lapse of time may have released me from the obligation of keeping it secret; in fact, I may as well say that it is so. You were the smallest concern in my share of that out-of-the-way bit of by-play of seventeen years ago. My patron of the occasion paid me liberally according to his means for the service rendered. He had his own reasons for wishing the child dead; I had discovered his hatred of it before it was ushered into existence; but with too much conscience to permit the small life to drift out before it was fairly begun through any gross neglect. It must be dead to you, that was his edict. I was bound to obey instructions, of course, and I don't pretend to any particular quahms in doing so. I was distressed in those days, and let us hope not quite a fool. I did my bidding in the simplest way, and found means to discover all I then cared to

know. I discovered what relation existed between my patron saint and my patient, what distorted and over-strained views of his, along with some personal disappointment which I put down to quite a wrong basis then, influenced the strong feeling which he expressed and from which he acted. I traced up the child and kept the remembrance of his anxiety before me, letting you drop out of sight as a doomed character whose part in the play was well over. It was left me to understand that the dead life which disturbed my patron saint's mind at a later date was to be yours from that time forth. I have not even attempted to reconcile that departure from his plans as I understood them. You were to enter some institution of sequestered sisterhood and be dead to all the world. Whether that was so much duplicity on his part, or if he was overruled by your will afterward, I wouldn't pretend to say now. I retained my knowledge, and my very good friend was happy to remember my service of that time at various intervals in a substantial way during the seventeen years since—remembered it handsomely as his circumstances would permit upon his death-bed. And only then I suspected for the first how much a wider sphere gratitude should have attained in the upper stratum. No more duty was owing to my patron saint, so, manifestly, my duty to myself was that to be developed next."

"You mean," interrupted Mrs. Richland's quiet voice, "that after extorting bribes to insure your silence from him, all his life, he is no sooner dead than you betray the last confidence he reposed in you. You think to have gained a hold upon me which shall answer the same as the power you have held over him."

"Ah, but there you mistake," answered Dr. Dallas, with that humbly deprecating gesture. "I have a taste for mysteries—almost any one of my regular patients can tell you so, and a faculty which possibly may run into a species of harmless mania for following up the same. Let us call it that, and say I have a mania for mastering mysteries of this sort. Then there are family prides and family honors which might be so nearly affected by the same; fancy the gratification of such responsibility as having family pride and family honor hanging upon a word withheld or spoken by me. There is something irresistibly charming, inexpressibly delightful in the thought."

"That tells me nothing of what you want or expect of me. Don't boast or attempt indisputable triumph before you have gained grounds for the same; it is in exceedingly bad taste to do so, Dr. Dallas."

"And Mrs. Richland is an oracle from whom there is no appeal. 'Man wants but little here below,' my dear madame, and my want is moderate. I want Wilma Wilde speedily found, and when found, I want that you shall urge no interference with my own claim which I may bring forward."

"And then you would betray all you know or fancy you know, to my husband?"

"My dear madame, betray! It is the second time you have used the word to reflect to my disadvantage. It is the code of the profession never to betray. With such family pride and family honor as I have already made reference to hanging in the balance—"

"You possibly might find yourself forestalled in any disclosure you had to make. You have shown me what I may expect from you, Dr. Dallas. Take the assurance that I am quite capable of that much in return."

The flame had made a leap into the phlegmatic cheeks. Even Dr. Dallas, phlegmatic, designing, experienced a feeling akin to admiration at sight of the face answering so aptly to a strong resolution, and in the second it required the unwonted impulse to turn cold again, he found himself left the solitary occupant of the room, Mrs. Richland's clear, bell-like, vibrating tone without ringing distinctly in his hearing.

"You will find Dr. Dallas in the library, William, waiting to be shown out. Attend to your duty at once."

True grit, and not a waver, I believe, by my soul! The doctor muttered to himself, between his teeth with a smile which was no favorable index upon his face. "It is well to have a host in reserve, my high-handed madame. Foretell me if you like; eat humble pie to your heart's content; trust in winning forgiveness for the simple deception resulting from girlish folly as you will doubtless put it; call up the pathetic story of the early unhappy marriage; gain all the sympathy and avert all the blame, and then be overwhelmed by the evidence I can bring to bear. I owe you that much full for your scornful treatment of me."

There is never pity in a heart like his; never mercy in a narrow, cold, steel soul. He would have had no feeling but of exultation had he been a witness to the moment of utter prostration which succeeded, robbing her of all that brave assured bearing, bowing her pallid, and with every nerve relaxed with the swift throes of agitation rushing over her.

"Mine—my very own—Wilma mine!" were the words her softened lips whispered to herself, breathlessly, over and over again. "Mine, and I never to know it, not to suspect it when my heart yearned over her to the strain of breaking."

She was invisible still when Mrs. Latham's carriage, drawn by the docile, docile, docile, but ten minutes later, when her husband returned with Lenoir in his company, her quiet, contained presence was the first to meet them.

It was less quiet, or less contained, as Lenoir's mission was unavailed, not one there had any perception of it.

"Gertrude's presence always does me good," her husband had said once, in confidence to a friend. "She is calm, with a reliance which an earthquake would not shock. I don't believe in men who require a prop, but I'm proud to declare in my wife as pure stuff as ever I recall in a Spartan mother."

That stuff, had Mr. Richland only been aware, shone at its brightest in the half-hour after his return. Wilma claimed by a strange father who had not suspected her existence until less than a fortnight past; Wilma, for whom the father-love and the mother-love had sprung up, and been recognized so very recently—Wilma gone from both; the two separated by such a chilling, dread-inspiring barrier that never in time could they be mutually drawn by the influence which was so powerful with each.

There could be but one aim now as conceded by general acclamation—though had they observed Mrs. Richland was mute there—Wilma must be found, no method must be left untried, and Lenoir carried with him authority to insert a carefully worded advertisement in each of the leading dailies.

Later, Erle Hetherville came in with wet white face and blue eyes stormily ablaze—came in on his fair fiancée as it chanced, quite alone. "What does it mean?" he broke out, with perfect abruptness. "What truth is there in this Crayton has been telling me, that Wilma is gone without provocation and without warning? What has driven that inexperienced child to such a step?"

Erle wondered at his vehemence, looking up

that it was her duty to go, and that she would appeal to a friend. We are all at the greatest loss without one trace of a clue to show us in which direction to turn with a hope of finding her.

"She must be found, she shall be!" declared Erle, in the same strangely vehement way.

But the days wore themselves out, and Wilma's friends were worn along with them through anxiety for her; but neither Erle's declaration, which was followed by his earnest action, nor Captain Leigh Bernham's widely instituted search, nor Mr. Richland's perplexed following of their two examples, resulted in any return or hint of success. Crayton had faded out of the field almost before the others engaged in it—faded as well from the familiar places which had known him daily before, but which now knew him not.

Thus for three days.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A STRICKEN VILLAGE.

THREE busy, anxious days they had been, up in the little Westmoreland village. Malignant typhoid was sweeping its way with an irresistible force, and had stricken a third of the population in this short time. Scarcely a family where one or more members had not succumbed to the disease. One of the Biffin children had died, and on the morning of the third day the still little form lay in its plain casket. Before night another one had passed out of life, and the same grave would receive them both.

There were indefatigable workers in the midst of the suffering, frightened people. Dr. Joy, burly and gruff, and inveighing against the willful disregard of all sanitary measures, until the shock of a calamity like this fell upon them, courting disease by their habits of living, their overcrowded, ill-ventilated houses, was doing his best to mitigate the affliction. His own regular round of patients, together with this added strain, had kept him at his best effort for three days and nights, but the doctor was one of those prickly human beings that will bristle all over and resent as an injury any recognition of his own warm-heartedness, or persistent sacrifice of his own comfort.

"If I care to waste any time in blowing up these foolishly villagers," Dr. Joy would say, "and punish them with physics and drugs they ought never to need in this healthy atmosphere, it's their look-out, not mine. They have no business to leave the door open for the thief to walk in. If they had taken the advice of Miss Erle there, and drained off the quagmires at their back doors, three months ago, they might have spared themselves the visitation. Talk about the land of Providence! In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the people owe such visitations to their own folly and neglect. For the credit of human intelligence I'd like to see some common sense brought to bear among the lot, and as long as they shirk that result of their own accord they'll have to take it in the homeopathic doses we can force upon them."

Prudence was invaluable, and Miss Erle spent her days chiefly at the village. Even when not there in person she was in mind, laying plans and issuing orders for the comfort of her stricken flock. Wilma went with her, the quiet little hands and gentle voice and sweet face exerting a soothing influence over the invalids until Dr. Joy, stopping her once, laughingly declared that her ministrations had fair to rival his own bitter draughts and caustic lectures.

Miss Erle had driven down to the village for the second time that day. It was near evening, the wintry sun appearing in occasional cold gleams between gray clouds massed against the sky. Wilma had gone with her into the Biffin cottage, and stood for a moment looking down at the two still little forms already robed for burial. It seemed a happy escape forthright as she turned away and met the sight of the narrow house overcrowded with the living, yet, sharp-featured, unhealthy little faces looking out from all sides, another child and the mother taken down with the disease.

Prudence had worked wonders in bringing neatness and order out of the chaos which had reigned, but at its best, and subdued by the presence of sickness and death, such a prospect as life there offered turned Wilma sick at heart for a moment and made her glad to get back into the free air, with a chill of breeze rushing through the straggling village streets.

"They say some one is wanted to stay with Mrs. Brooke," said Miss Erle, coming out to join her moment later. "Cases have multiplied so fast, and the people here are so inefficient, that those who are competent to attend are obliged to change from place to place as they are most needed. The Brooke woman is low, past hope of recovery the doctor says. Would you mind sitting with her, Wilma, while I visit the other places? She is both tranquil and conscious now."

"I shall not mind in the least, except to be glad of any chance for usefulness, and if you think Mrs. Brooke will not be alarmed. She appeared so strangely and so strongly agitated when I was there with you first that I have never gone back."

She was wondering then, her old conduct simply the result of a delirious fancy. She would not know you, but she does not much notice what goes on about her. You know the house?"

Wilma answered in assent and turned that way, while Miss Erle continued the course of her round. A little brown detached cottage, with a few feet of walk in front, and a gate swinging, as some careless passer-through had left it. Wilma went in, closing the gate and quietly admitting herself, as her soft knock elicited no response. A fire was burning in a little polished stove, a few articles of furniture were ranged about the walls, a shelf of shining tinware and common delf filled a corner, but the room was empty of any presence. A door opening into a second room was ajar, and through it she had a glimpse of a narrow bed, with a gay coverlet thrown over, and a bright rag-mat on the floor before it.

She went through into the sick room quietly. No one was there except the prostrate form upon the bed. Mrs. Brooke was in a slumber, looking compassionately into the sleeping face, thin and worn and touched with age, the hair, the hollow cheeks and wrinkled forehead and closed eyes looking deathly in their pallor and hard stillness. She was so perfectly still that with a little thrill of awe Wilma put out her hand to touch the pale forehead. Light as the touch was it aroused the sleeper, and the sunken eyes came wide with a startled glance up into the young face bending above her.

"I did not mean to wake you," she said. "I came to sit with you for a little time. If you can sleep again, do so."

The woman shrunk away, her eyes, startled and staring, not leaving the girl's face.

"Who are you?" she asked, in a hollow whisper. "You touched me, didn't you?"

"Yes, it was that waked you. I am Wilma Wilde, and I stay with Miss Erle. Can I do anything for you?"

"No, no," the woman answered, and lay still, with that same strange look still fixed

upon Wilma's face. Such a steady sort of awed gaze that Wilma grew embarrassed under it first, then restless, with something very like a dread of those fixed, staring eyes. She was glad when a neighboring woman came in presently to give the medicine the doctor had left. The interruption seemed like the lifting of an incubus which had weighed upon her.

"Are you staying?" the woman asked, in a whisper. "I'll not be then. My man is coming down with it I'm thinking, and my hands are full enough at home. It's a sore day for all that brought the scourge down upon us."

She went, and still the sick woman regarded Wilma with that same intent, curious look. The impression she derived from it lingered with her afterward—an uncomfortable sense, a vague realization of some meaning or some cause underlying it which had an undefined relation to herself.

The sound of a footstep and a knock at the outer door brought a relief to her sense of oppression. She arose hastily, with a desire to escape the gaze which followed her even then. She had not doubted opening to Miss Erle, but, instead, it was a masculine figure looming against the gray clouded atmosphere, which obscured all trace of the sunset. A rather tall, thin figure, with an overcoat buttoned to the chin and traveler's cap slouched about his ears; for the first instant she did not recognize any thing familiar about him.

"Miss Wilde!" exclaimed the voice belonging to the form. "I fancy I need never be tempted to rail against unpropitious fates after this, and I should as soon have thought of looking for you in Jericho! I wonder if you have an idea of what a hue and cry has been raised after you, Miss Wilma?"

His glove had come off and he was clasping her hand before she had recovered from her first start of surprise. Certainly Crayton was the last person she could have expected to meet in the falling gloom, upon the threshold of that plain little cottage in the isolated little Westmoreland village.

"Oh, Mr. Crayton, did you follow me here?" cried Wilma, having lost his words in the start her recognition of him had given. "Did they send you? Oh, I am sorry, sorry, if I have distressed them much; but indeed I can not go back. If you would promise that you will not mention having seen me."

"Surely you must know where my weakness lies, Miss Wilma. And yet I venture to assert that you would never forgive me should I consent to ruin all your future prospects by too close observation of an impulsive young lady's whim. Perhaps you haven't an idea even of what a service I might do you by merely mentioning our meeting here!"

"I am very sure that the very best service you can possibly render me will be to keep silence, Mr. Crayton. If it were possible that any prospect could be made tempting enough to persuade me back to them, I should pray that I might be kept in ignorance of it. I am well cared for, and am happy in finding myself of use here. I am staying with Miss Erle. Oh, Mr. Crayton, promise that you will not force me to leave here by betraying my whereabouts to them. It is best as it is, believe me."

"I must promise against my better judgment, then. But then, I never could refuse a lady, especially a young and pretty one. I'm not content to relate that I've seen you here—certainly not. I came on a matter of different business, and because I chance to stumble across the charming object of much solicitude on the part of certain friends of mine just now, it isn't at all incumbent upon me to betray the knowledge which accident merely has revealed. I see that is the view you take of it. Very well, my dear Miss Wilma; much gratification as it might afford me to report your safety and your continuance of regard, I must in all gallantry submit to your wish instead."

"I should like them to know," said Wilma, "that I am safe, and that I do hold them in most grateful remembrance. If I should write just a line saying that, and if you would kindly mail it in the city and not mention seeing me, it would be the very greatest favor I could ask."

She had come out by his side, drawing the door close so only the faintest murmur of their voices could be distinguished in the rooms within.

"I would advise it," said the reporter, earnestly. "Let me tell you, the Richlands are in a terrible state of anxiety regarding your disappearance, which is equivalent to a Greek puzzle to them. Do you suppose you could manage to make out with a pencil and ink a note book here? I'll see that it's put in a form for safe delivery. I rather expect to go back at midnight, and to be busy meantime."

He produced the articles which were required from an inner pocket, and whistled some disconnected bars of an air as he gazed away through the gap between the squat little houses while she hurriedly wrote her message. The air was a keen chill, and Wilma's benumbed fingers produced a tremulous scrawl—her own love and gratitude, sorrow for their distress, an assurance of her safety, and that the course she had taken was much for the best.

"And I venture that yonder is Miss Erle's turnout," said Crayton, as he received the little missive. "Is she waiting there for you?"

"If you only would promise me again," Wilma said, wistfully. "If you certainly will not betray having seen me; if you will mail that to Mrs. Richland, I will be so truly indebted."

"And as I said I can't refuse; but remember, the concession is given against my better judgment."

"Thank you the same, however," said Wilma, warmly, and leaving him, went down the street to meet Miss Erle, who had stopped the carriage to consult with Dr. Joy upon the side-walk.

(To be continued.—Commenced in No. 194.)

ONE-ARMED ALF,

The Giant Hunter of the Great Lakes;

OR,
THE MAID OF MICHIGAN.

A ROMANCE OF THE WAR OF 1812.

BY OLL COOMES.

AUTHOR OF "DEATH NOTCH," "BOY FIVE," "OLD SOLDIER," "HAWKEYE HARRY," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER VII.—(CONTINUED.)

The shadow passed but with a few paces from our friends, then followed a sound like an animal sniffing the air, and at the same time two dull, scintillating orbs of fire became visible near or against the shadow. But these lasted only for a moment. The shadow and orbs floated away into the gloom, but close behind them and bolt upright, stalked in human form, another dark shadow of Brobdingnagian proportions. But this shadow also passed away so quick that the silent watchers could scarcely believe that they had seen any thing at all.

"No, no, boys," said Jack Eller, after they had discussed the matter at length, "thar war nothing material in what we see'd. You must look into the matter in a philosophic light. Thar shadder war nothin' but an illusion of the eye; or it might have been a concentrated shadder."

"Who ever heard of a concentrated shadow?" questioned Paul Engle, scouting such an idea.

"Why, boy, if ye only knowed any thing you'd know that are such shadows. I've seen 'em standin' stock-still afore now in a dark, wooded valley; but the instant the sun or moon skipped out from behind a cloud, away'd go the shadow like a big giant."

"I can't indorse your philosophical explanation of what we have seen, Mr. Eller, although such a thing may be possible. But suppose we drop the subject and look after the object that brought us here, for time is precious, you know."

"Certainly, sartainly, captain," replied old Jack; "let us be movin', come weal or woe."

They at once resumed their journey, moving slow and cautiously; but they had journeyed but a short way when they were again brought to a stand, this time by a sound like that which would be produced by some dying, strangling creature gasping for breath.

"What the mysterious can it be, anyhow?" asked old Jack Eller.

"It appears to be something or some one gasping for breath," replied St. John.

They listened and at once became convinced that the captain was right, though it might have been produced by an enemy trying to decoy them into an ambush. St. John, however, impatient to test the matter, drew his pistol and moved silently but briskly toward the sound. He soon issued into an open area, or glade, where the sunlight reached the earth, unobscured by foliage; and there, in the center of the opening, he saw an Indian warrior, reclining against a stone, his hands lying limp and helpless at his side and his chin drooping upon his naked breast. He was in the last throes of death, being totally unconscious, and a moment after our friends found him, there was a sudden convulsion of the body that jerked him almost to his feet. This was followed by a relaxation of the muscles, and the Indian sunk lifeless to the earth.

Captain St. John saw that he was neither scalped nor mutilated, but had come to the end of a long journey, and there, in the center of the opening, he saw an Indian warrior, reclining against a stone, his hands lying limp and helpless at his side and his chin drooping upon his naked breast. He was in the last throes of death, being totally unconscious, and a moment after our friends found him, there was a sudden convulsion of the body that jerked him almost to his feet. This was followed by a relaxation of the muscles, and the Indian sunk lifeless to the earth.

"By Judas Iskariot, the Spirit of the Woods has laid it out Ojibway!"

"Yes, or rather Darcy Mayfield," added St. John.

"Hist!—harkce, cap'n!" exclaimed old Jack. He, as well as his companions, had suddenly caught the sound of a heavy body threshing through the undergrowth on the opposite side of the opening, but the sound soon became hushed for several moments, then was resumed again with more violence than before, and was accompanied by the thud and crunch of blows, and low, subdued groans.

The noise appeared to be approaching, and so our friends beat a hasty retreat to the shadows on the edge of the glade, and there paused.

The next instant they beheld two figures, locked in each other's embrace, come whirling in rapid evolutions from the darkness into the glade, engaged in a force and deadly struggle!

CHAPTER VIII. ENTRAPPED.

Our friends stood as though rooted to the spot, so sudden and startling had been the transition of events, and before they could determine who the two combatants were that came rolling in such rapid evolutions into the glade, a third figure shot suddenly into the opening from the deep, black shadows beyond. This was readily recognized as the form of a beast—a huge deer-hound. The dog was immediately followed by the tall figure of a man whom all readily recognized as One-Armed Alf, the Silent Scout.

On the edge of the glade he paused, but it was only for a moment—until he had taken in the situation of the two struggling foes, then he strode across the glade to where they were engaged, and raising aloft his only weapon—his long knife—he dealt one of them a blow that at once terminated the conflict. Then, with a silent exclamation of triumph and relief, the other arose to his feet and turning to the Giant Scout, said, in a calm, matter-of-fact tone:

"Thanks, brother Alf. You came in time, for I must admit that I had my hands full—the knife was an exception to anything I ever had a hold of, in point of strength."

"By Judas!" exclaimed old Jack Eller, no longer enabled to restrain his emotions, "it's One-Armed Alf and Darcy Mayfield! Howdy, Alf! Well, Darcy, you young rascal, what for did you give us the slip the way you did? Glad to meet you, Alf; this is Cap'n St. John, from Mackinaw; glad to find you with your hair on, Alf—got your message and hussled off up here like sixty. What's on the rampage by this time?"

"The woods are full of the heathen foe," replied the Giant Scout, in a low tone; "bloody times may now be expected. The spirit of evil and the Indians go hand in hand, and, too, the Spirit of the Wilderness is abroad."

"Ay, ay, friend Alf," returned Eller, "you speak the truth. We see an Ojibway that the Spirit has slashed it to, not an hour ago. But how comes it that you're in trouble?"

"I know not unless the varlets mistrust that I am a friend to the whites."

"But you don't go cuttin' and slashin' and shootin' around like Mayfield here, so why should they trouble you?"

"They know my inability to handle fire-arms successfully," replied the scout, "but they begin to mistrust something of the real truth—that I am a scout and spy in the employ of the United States. But I care nothing for this; so those lives at Mackinaw are what interest me now, for they're in imminent danger."

"Well, stranger," said St. John, addressing the scout, "we are now on our way to Mackinaw."

"But you have gone out of your course by coming this way."

"We came this way on purpose to help you out of your danger first."

"I am greatly obliged to you, friends, for your kind regard for me, but do not tarry here, I pray. If you go with me to my cabin, I will look up and go with you to Mackinaw."

"That's the talk, friend Alf," said old Jack; "your assistance as a scout will be worth a dozen good men."

"Then follow me," replied the scout, and turning, he moved away into the woods. His faithful hound took the lead, while Eller and his party followed close behind the scout.

A few minutes' walk brought them to the door of the scout's cabin. All was darkness and silence within. One-Armed Alf gave the surrounding glade a hasty glance, then opened the door and entered the building, followed by his companions.

A light was soon struck, and as its rays dispelled the lurking shadows from the apartment, the scout glanced about the room as if looking for some one or something.

"Somethin' missin', Alf?" asked the inquisitive old Jack Eller.

"Yes, Edhope, my black companion and housekeeper, is gone, and it seems a little

strange that he should be away at this time. I hope he's not got into trouble."

"Ay, ay, you mean that black nigger? I remember him now," replied Eller.

"I can see no signs of violence about the place," said Darcy Mayfield.

"Harkce! There's a footstep at the door; it may be your nig."

Every eye was at once bent upon the door, when the hound of the scout was seen to leap into the room with apparent fright.

"What is it, Sultan—what is it?"

The dog uttered a low, plaintive whine and advancing to the door again, he elevated his nose, sniffed the air with apparent doubt, then bounded back to his master's side again.

Then a figure appeared in the doorway, that caused a convulsive movement of every form in the cabin. It was the figure of an Indian, painted and plumed for the war-path, with his shoulders enveloped in a red, flaming blanket.

A half-defiant smile rested upon the face of the savage as he ran his eyes about the room and scanned the faces of our friends. His presence seemed to enjoin silence upon every one present; and during the hush, Captain St. John glanced toward Darcy Mayfield, and was surprised at the unearthly light of vengeance that blazed in his eyes. He saw his hand seek the knife at his girdle, and as the young man's breast swelled with the fearful emotions stirred within it, he—St. John—saw the murderous blade creep slowly from its sheath; but before it was entirely withdrawn, the fearful spell was broken—his deadly intentions arrested by One-Armed Alf, who stepped forward and confronting the Indian, said:

"Why is a war-chief of the Ojibways here, when his brothers are away, fighting the Yankees in Canada?"

"Bruders not all there. Lots in Michigan woods. Me here to talk with One Arm," replied the Indian, in a tone and language that convinced all present that he was not a genuine Indian, but a white man in disguise. "But, with feigned ignorance of the fact, the Giant Scout replied:

"Come in then, and let me hear what you have to say."

The Indian advanced into the house, and, at a signal from the scout, his comrades fell back and seated themselves on the opposite side of the room. The Indian and One-Armed Alf remained standing.

"I am ready now to hear what the Ojibway chief has to say to me," the scout said.

"Does One Arm and his pale-face friends know there is war between our people?"

We have heard it intimated, but have no positive proof of the fact; and sincerely hope that it is not so."

"It is so," replied the Indian, glancing from one to the other of his auditors to see the effect his words would have upon them, "and hundreds of Yankee scalps hang at Indian girdles."

"Do you know this to be a fact, Ojibway?"

"I do. Already great battles have been fought."

"Where at?"

"One at Mackinaw."

"And what was the result of the fight at Mackinaw?"

"Mackinaw was captured."

"Great Heaven! Can this be possible?" cried Captain St. John, starting up.

A grim smile of satisfaction and triumph passed over the face of the Indian as he replied: "The young warrior is surprised at the news—so are his companions; but Long Run tells the truth; Mackinaw has fallen."

"Oh, God! let me out of this—let me go!" cried St. John, starting wildly toward the door.

"Hold a moment, young man," said One-Armed Alf, laying his hand on the young captain's shoulder; "wait, and we will go with you. The time has come when cool, calm consideration beforehand will be our only safeguard."

"It is hard—hard to do, Alf, when the lives of those we hold dear may hang upon the action of a moment," said the captain, resuming his seat.

Then One-Armed Alf turned to the Ojibway and continued:

"Let us hear what else Long Run has to communicate."

"I have but little more to say, for One Arm's mind is long and he can guess the rest. He knows that the great lakes were once the undisputed range of the red-man. But the pale-faces came in and drove him away and built up forts and villages; cut down our trees, and killed our game and our brothers. Now the red-men have dug up the hatchet. The pale-faces must all die, or flee from the hunting-grounds of the Indian. One Arm can not shoot, neither can he wield a tomahawk; but his skin is white, and his heart is too, and his scalp would count one in the eyes of the great Canada Father. The red-men would not take the scalp of one whom the Great Spirit made without an arm, as an example of his wrath and punishment upon all white men who raise their hands against the red-skin; but when the Indian hatchet, wet with pale-face blood, is raised, he spares none."

"I observe, Ojibway," said One-Armed Alf, leaning slightly upon his long, knotted cane, "that you have some secret motive in coming here—something besides your avowed friendship and kindness. In the first place I observe you are not an Indian, but a white man disguised, which misrepresentation leads me to mistrust you of some treachery."

A low, silent and devilish laugh escaped the disguised villain's lips, which was succeeded by the sound of footsteps without. Then our friends caught the glimpse of other figures outside of the door, and a moment later, a dozen real Indian warriors filed into the room, their faces aglow with a subtle, malicious smile.

They paused and glanced around them with well feigned surprise; then, at a sign from the renegade, they all seated themselves upon the floor, facing the whites. The very countenance of the painted wretches was an index to the cunning treachery and murderous intent of their hearts; and the boldness of their intrusion, and the mocking sneer upon their faces, were intended to provoke the whites to some demonstration of violence. But the cool equanimity and dogmatic forbearance of One-Armed Alf overcame the spirit of resentment, and for the time being the storm was stayed. In fact, he went so far as to turn and glance at the savages with provoking coolness, at the same time saluting them with a friendly bow. But his glance was immediately transferred to his companions, who read a volume of meaning in it: "Boys, were entrapped! But stand firm, and die like men!"

CHAPTER IX. HAND-TO-HAND.

A DEEP and profound silence followed the bold intrusion of the red-skins into the cabin of One-Armed Alf; but it was a silence, which, when fully broken, would be by the cries of agony wrested from men in a terrible death-struggle.

Although the red-skins all came wrapped in blankets, and some of them smoking, in order to allay suspicion of their purposes, their treacherous intentions were too thinly disguised to escape the notice of the scout. He knew full well that they had murderous weapons

concealed beneath their blankets, ready for instant use; and the superiority of their number, with the thought that others might be concealed outside, gave the scout much uneasiness, yet he permitted no look or word to betray his emotions of fear.

Long Run, as the renegade had called himself, glanced at each of the whites, as if to read their perturbation of mind, then said:

"Why are the pale-faces silent and amazed? Have they not looked upon Ojibway warriors before?"

"We have," replied One-Armed Alf, seeing that there was no evading the subject, "and we have looked upon more welcome visitors; I can assure you."

"A damned sight," added old Jack Eller, unable to control his tongue longer; "I've seen lots of 'em niggers than you lot of red gaboos, and I'd like to be knowin' wharfore ye're here."

"We have come for scalps, horses, pretty squaws and lots of things, and we'll have them too, unless you agree to take them all and leave the country of the red-man."

"Have we violated the confidence you intrusted in us in the past?" asked Captain St. John.

"No; but your great Father at Washington has declared war against our Canada Father, and we know you'll take sides with your people."

"Suppose, then, we agree to leave here, what assurance have we that you will not follow and shoot us when our backs are turned?"

"Then One Arm does not believe an Ojibway can tell the truth," said Long Run.

"Yes, an Ojibway might, but a renegade like you is not to be believed."

A grim, satanic smile flitted across the face of Long Run, and his eyes flashed a deadly, revengeful look upon the undaunted scout.

A momentary silence followed the scout's retort, then the renegade said:

"It is no use for us to spend further words, One Arm. We are here for two things. One, to exact a promise that you will leave this country; another, for one person in your party."

As he spoke, the chief rose slowly to his feet.

"Which one of our party do you want?" asked the scout.

"That one," the renegade replied, pointing to Darcy Mayfield.

"What do you want him for—to eat?" asked old Jack, in a tone of provoking sarcasm.

"That's none of the old gray-beard's business," replied Long Run; "we want that man alive, if we can get him, but if not, we will take him dead."

There was an involuntary commotion among our friends, and each eye sought the face of Darcy Mayfield, who stood unmoved by the demands of the renegade chief. He did, however, exchange glances with the Giant Scout, then both fixed a close, studying gaze upon Long Run's face, as if trying to penetrate his disguise of paint and feathers. While thus engaged, old Jack Eller broke forth:

"I say, Long Run, you're a damned on'ry knave, and if you want to stand erect here without a punctured hide, you must talk more respectfully to me, Jackson Eller, or I'll be cussed if I don't swamp you, tooth and nail. My blood's beginnin' to bile, and the heart's blood of a hundred Ingins won't satisfy me when I get set to goin' on't, now mind, ye rampin' niggers you."

Long Run pretended not to have heard the old borderman's words, but fixing his eyes upon the scout, asked:

"What does the scout of the pale-faces say? Will he give up the young man, or will he not?"

"Long Run, do you take us for a pack of cowards? Do you suppose we will surrender one of our men to you? Never!"

"You must, or take the consequences."

"We'll take the consequences."

Long Run turned to his warriors, who had, all the while, maintained a stoical silence, and addressed a few words to them in the Ojibway tongue. Every warrior arose to his feet.

A deep hush fell upon the parties. Hands mechanically sought the weapons at the girdle. There was a swelling of the chest, a dulling of the eye, and slow, labored breathing that told of deeper and deeper passion within each man's breast. And now but a single word or movement was wanted to precipitate affairs. Every man was ready to fight to the death. Already the two lines of foes stood wavering in awful suspense—like the swaying of two great walls ere they lose their balance and fall.

Before the signal for the beginning of the conflict could be given by either party, however, the storm was stayed by a loud, gruff voice within the cabin door.

"Who'd I ever thought of finding a dozen Ojibs in the cabin of One-Armed Alf, all standin' in a row like school-boys toting a mark! And byar's a bull bit of whites, all in a row, too! And sweet Moses and Canaan dear! What tigerish looks ye all have! Why, what's up, boys? Any thing that Jabez Muggins, the life-givin', soul-ticklin' cockalorum of the Great Lakes, can have a finger in? Sneeze it out, One Arm; or you, you red skinnit, muddy chops, whar's the difference to Jabez? An understandin' wanted, gents—must have it—will ye have it, or over goes creation. Come, whistle out your story, One Arm—gobble it out, redskin, you lizard-wattled bung-nose of thunder!"

The last words were directed to Long Run, who replied, disdainfully:

"Whisky-trader all tongue—big talk—no sense."

"Oh, git e-out with yer slip-soft cackle. Tramp up and expostulate like a slick-tailed 'possum, or shed yer paint and show yer color!"

You have come in on the eve of a desperate conflict, Muggins," said the scout.

"Oh, I did, ey? Sorry I disturbed ye, boys, but there I'll stand a watter on it. That is, I'll treat all around and tickle yer tasties, and then I'll stand a chance to sell ye every drop of spasm-wedge in ole 'Knowledge' here. Why, I'm an orful ole fool, chicks; but I don't keer if ye'd shell out every dog-gone rinkum in your pockets for bottled joy. I'm not miserly—oh, no—but that's not filthly lure outside of the earth to dash my modesty; so now, boys, jist waz pawes over my keg and go in on a good ole drunk. I tell ye what, I've got a bunkum-squintum article here that will jist make ye git up and tater—make ye love each other like all fire and blazes—say, won't you all have a snifter?"

"This, Muggins," said One-Armed Alf, "is no time to trifle, and you'll oblige me by departing at once, or remaining quiet."

"Bah, now! Lookce here, ole One Arm, if you think I've no right here, shell out yer dockeyments."

"The scoundrel's in league with the Indians," exclaimed Old Jack; "kill him!"

"Not so, ole bear; I'm n'utral, I are, upon principle; but, if I ever fite at all, it's on the side that's mos' likely to whoop, and so ye kin jist count me ag'in ye if yer gorin' to have a leetle blood-spillin'."

"Shoot him! shoot the traitorous coward!" cried Old Jack, fierce with rage.

"I would kick him out of the cabin," said One-Armed Alf, "but such an insignificant creature doesn't deserve so much notice."

"Git e-out now, ole Giant," exclaimed the trader; "by the smoke of Halifax, if some one'd boost me up, I'd give you a sweet-scented diff' atwixt the squinters that'd organize yer calculations in the slappusie style, so I would—'whoop tee doodle, whoop tee doo'—say, larkies, can't I induce you to invest in a good, hearty spasm?"

Seeing that no one cared to invest, the trader arose and began waltzing, with a drunken swag, up and down the room between the two lines of foes, singing his favorite song as an accompaniment to his movements. His intrusion at the time had stayed the rising storm between the foes; still they maintained their hostile attitude, neither party yielding an inch. The savages stood with their arms folded beneath their blankets, and, no doubt, with their weapons in hand. As yet not one of the whites had drawn a weapon, but stood empty-handed. They did not wish to begin the affray, for the odds were against them, and there would be little hopes of victory. Some of them hoped that the intrusion of the whisky-trader would terminate in conciliation. But there was little prospect of this, for the Indians maintained a silent and sullen demeanor, and kept their black, snaky eyes fixed upon them with an unwavering and dogged determination, that could not be broken by the apparent unguarded looks of the whites, nor the ludicrous antics of Jabez Muggins, the whisky-trader.

Seeing that the whites were not inclined to provoke a fight, Long Run asked:

"Do the whites still say they will take the consequences?"

"We do, most assuredly," responded One-Armed Alf.

"See here, my party bobolinks," chimed in Muggins, "don't go to quarrelin' ag'in, but take a snifter of peace from my keg of glory. Be brothers, and I'll make money by it. This 'ere durned fightin' and scratchin' makes trade dull. But, if ye will fite, howsever, I'll jist hold my coon-skin over the light and let ye fite her out in the dark—extermineate each other, and then I'll come in fur the spiles of war, so I will, 'whoop tee doodle, whoop tee doo,' and he whirled away to where the lamp, that lit up the room, was burning—took off his coon-skin cap and held it over the light, thereby shading it, and wrapping the whole room and its inmates in blinding darkness.

"Now," he said, "you see you are all one color, and so why not be brothers—ay! there you are ag'in," and he suddenly removed his cap from over the lamp, permitting the dazzling rays to flood the room again.

Both the Indians and the whites appeared to regard these queer movements of the whisky-trader with no little curiosity; although the red-skins still maintained their unflinching position and sullen, determined looks; and our friends held their guarded watch upon them, lest the trader was trying to divert their attention from his real friends, who would be enabled then to pounce upon and massacre all without resistance.

"Ho! ho! ho!" Muggins finally broke forth.

"Why in the nation dunnit, you fellows fall in on yer muscle and not stand in idleness, lookin' at each other like a passel of bloody gumps? And now, if enny of ye want to run, I'll shade the lamp ag'in, then ye kin shove out. You see, I'm inclined to be generous-hearted for sake of peace and trade—now!—scat!"

Again he shaded the lamp with his cap, enveloping the room in shadows.

Then there followed a sudden, vivid flash; the crack of a fire-arm, succeeded by a death groan and the dull thump of a heavy body falling upon the floor. Again the cap was raised, and the light flared out, this time upon a terrible scene.

CHAPTER X. A MYSTERIOUS SHOT.

THE scene upon which the whites and their red enemies gazed was that of a lifeless body lying upon the floor before them, still quivering in death's last agonies. It was the form of the renegade, Long Run. He had fallen forward upon his side, with his hands clasped over his breast, where a little stream of blood was welling from a tiny bullet-hole, and trickling down between his fingers. An expression of horrible agony was frozen upon his face, and his eyes stared open, wild and glassy.

Every savage and white man seemed petrified—bound to the spot by the frightful scene. The Indians stood mute with horror, their arms still folded beneath their blankets, and their eyes riveted with terror upon the body of their dead friend. One-Armed Alf still stood where he had for the last ten minutes, leaning upon his long cane, regarding the scene with surprise and astonishment; while his companions gazed with disordered eyes, and faces marked with a strange fear, about the room, as if looking for the one that had fired the fatal shot. But he was not to be seen. Not a man in the cabin held a weapon in his hand; and yet the time that intervened between the report of the piece and the instant that the trader permitted the light to flood the room was but a moment, and had one of the whites fired the shot, he could not have concealed his weapon without being seen. Moreover, the report was that of a rifle, and such a weapon could not have been set aside or concealed in an instant, as might have been done with a pistol.

In view of these facts, it was plain enough that none of those in the cabin had fired the shot, and yet no one could have fired through the open door, for Long Run stood with his back toward the opening, and had been shot by a weapon in front of him.

Now arose the question, who was the unknown slayer—who had fired the fatal shot? The silence that followed the death of the renegade was broken by the whisky-trader, who suddenly exclaimed, in excessive terror:

"Lor' Harry, who shot, who shot? Heavens, oh! I didn't think my foolin' would result thusly. Oh, agony! that spirit I seed—I seed it rise up in the middle of the floor—it war the Spirit of the Woods, and it war he that plumped Long Run. Oh! Jerusalem, let me outen this—quick! or I'll faint!"

He made a dash for the door, but an Indian intercepted him on the threshold.

"Let the knitter go!" yelled old Jack Eller, advancing toward the Indian; "let the idiot go, and git out of here yerself, ye red blood-hounds of sin, you! Take this putrid carcass of yer master, and git, or I'll—"

He did not finish the sentence. An Indian sprang across the room, and seizing him, aimed a deadly blow at his head. The old borderman, however, retained much of his youthful activity, and dodging the blow, he grappled with the red-skin in a hand-to-hand encounter.

Then arose a wild, fearful yell within the cabin. The two lines of foes seemed to dissolve instantly into one, as they closed in deadly combat. At the very beginning of the affray, the table upon which the lamp sat was overturned and they fought in partial darkness. The crack, crack of pistols; the dull, crunching blows of fists and tomahawks; the thump of falling bodies, mingled with yells, execrations and cries of agony, made the forest ring with wild, horrible intonations.

To add to the dangers and terrors of the moment, the overturned lamp set a pallet of leaves and reeds on fire, and the red flames flared out and crept up the wall like a serpent, filling the room with thick, fetid smoke and stifling heat.

This new enemy strikes a new fear to the hearts of the combatants. There is a lull in the conflict. They are breathing hard with suffocation. They rush toward the door for egress and the open air, but they find it is closed and barred. They tear at the fastenings like madmen, but they can not open it. It is fast. Some one had shut them in with the hissing, crackling flames. They turn—they glare at each other like men driven to desperation, then they close again in conflict; but their efforts are weak—their struggles are feeble, for they are the struggles of suffocation—dying men!

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 100.)

RED ARROW, THE WOLF DEMON; OR, THE Queen of the Kanawha.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.
AUTHOR OF "ROCKY MOUNTAIN MEN," "THE MAN FROM TEXAS," "OVERLAND KIT," "RED MAZETTA," "A CHASE OF SPANES," "HARVEST OF FIRE," "WITCHES OF NEW YORK," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXXIV.
THE RETURN TO POINT PLEASANT.

"Now I know what was the matter with him before," cried Boone, as he knelt by Lark's side.

"One of these fits, eh?"

"Yes."

Slowly Lark's scattered senses came back to him. With a vacant look he gazed into the faces of the two men who knelt by his side.

"By hooky, you've had a rough time of it," said Boone.

"I have been out of my head, then?"

"Yes, mad as a March hare," replied the borderer.

"Just look at the strips of deer-skin," said Kenton, pointing to the severed pieces lying at the foot of the oak. "You bust 'em just as if they had been paper."

"I feel weak enough now," said Lark, sadly.

"No wonder!" exclaimed Boone, "you've used up all your strength. Jerusalem! I thought you'd pull the oak over. I shouldn't like to have a tussle with you when you're in one of them queer fits like you had just now."

Aided by his companions, Lark rose slowly to his feet.

"Say, Abe, have you any idea what it is that makes you act so queer?" Kenton asked.

"Yes; do you see this scar?" and Lark pointed to the terrible, livid mark that disfigured his face.

"Of course," Kenton replied.

"The wound that made that scar is the cause of it; that is, I think it is. The wound affected my head. I have never been the same man since."

"It's a mighty strange thing," said Boone, wonderingly.

"Yes, I've had these spells before. I can always tell when they are coming on. I have a strange, burning sensation in my head; everything before my eyes is tinged with red; the blood races like wildfire through my veins, then all my senses leave me. I can remember nothing."

"How did you receive the wound?" Boone asked.

"In an Indian fight. After it was given me I lay for days between life and death. I escaped death, but the dark cloud of madness followed me."

"Well, it's the queerest story that I ever did hear tell of," said Boone, sagely.

"How do you feel now?" asked Kenton.

"Oh, much better," replied Lark.

"Strong enough for to go on?"

"Yes."

"Let's be making tracks, then."

Carefully and cautiously the three proceeded through the thicket.

No hostile Indians barred their course, and by the time the sun reached the meridian, the three entered the stockade that fenced Point Pleasant.

Warm was the greeting that they received from the settlers, but many a sun-bronzed cheek grew pale, and many a stout heart beat quick when the scouts told the story of Kanawha's expedition.

It was sad news indeed to the hardy borderers when they learned that the great Shawnee chieftain had dug up the war-hatchet, and would soon bring his painted warriors—hot for slaughter—to the banks of the Ohio.

Then, too, for the first time, Boone heard the story of the strange disappearance of General Trevelling's daughter, Virginia.

The rage of the old Indian-fighter knew no bounds when he heard that the renegade, Girty, had abducted the girl.

"The eternal villain!" he cried, in wrath, "let me draw 'head' on him once, and he'll never carry off any other white gal to give to the painted devils that he calls his brothers."

The party headed by Jake Jackson, who had been in search of traces of the missing girl, had returned to Point Pleasant just before the arrival of the three scouts. Their search had been fruitless; no traces of the missing girl had they discovered.

"I'll tell you what it is, General," said Boone to the aged father, whose sad countenance showed plainly his deep grief, "thar ain't any use of looking for the gal, or that 'tarnal villain either, in the timber 'bout hyer. He's made tracks long ago for the Injun settlement by the banks of the Scioto, Chillicothe, as the red heathens call it."

"But, colonel, can nothing be done to rescue her?" asked the aged father, in despair.

"Why, General, you see it's a bad time for to do any thing. Within twenty-four hours the Injuns will be around us thick as bees round a hive. We'll have our hands full to attend to the savages and keep their paws off our top-knots. I feel right bad for you, General, but you know our first duty is to the helpless settlers and young 'uns hyer. We can't let 'em be massacred right afore our eyes, you know. We've got to whip the red devils fast; then we'll do what we can toward saving your little gal."

"You are right, Boone," said the old soldier, sadly; "the safety of the whole settlement can not be put in peril for the sake of my private grief. I must bow in submission to the will of Heaven, though my affliction is sore."

"General, I feel for you, but duty you know is duty," said Boone, slowly.

"Heaven forbid that I should say a single

word to sware you from the path of duty. I am too old a soldier to counsel you to do wrong," said the old man quickly.

"Besides, General, I think about the best blow that we can strike for your daughter's rescue is to whip the red heathens that are coming ag'in us. When we drive 'em back, then we can follow them up, and perhaps be able to snake the little gal out of their hands." Boone was trying by his words to lift the weight of sorrow that pressed so heavily upon the heart of the old soldier.

The father shook his head, sorrowfully. He had little hope of ever seeing his daughter again.

He knew the nature of the red-men well. If defeated in their attack on the station, they would be apt in their rage to avenge their defeat by giving any helpless prisoner that might be in their hands to the fiery torture of death at the stake. No wonder that the father's heart was sad.

"How many men have come in, Jake?" questioned Boone.

"We've got nigh onto two hundred, all told," replied the sturdy Indian-fighter.

Well we ought to be able to whip a thousand of the red-skins easy," said Boone, in a confident tone. "Do you expect any more, Jake?"

"Not above half a dozen, kurnel," we've drawn 'bout all our men in now," Jackson replied.

"Set the women to running bullets, and get plenty of water inside the stockade. The red heathens may make a siege of it," said Boone.

"Everything has been fixed, kurnel."

"That's pert. Now, Jake, I guess we three had better take a little rest. We've been everlastingly tramping through the timber. Throw out some scouts up the river to watch for the red devils. After I've had an hour's nap I'll take to the woods myself."

Then Boone went to his cabin; he was followed by Kenton and Lark.

"I wonder what's the matter with the stranger; did you notice how pale he looked?" Jackson said, referring to Lark.

"Wal—yes, I did," replied one of the settlers, who stood by Jackson's side. "I reckon they've had a pretty tough tramp onto it. Maybe, though, some one of us will look white after we get through with Ke-ne-ha-ha and his Shawnees."

Many an anxious face in the little group of men that surrounded Jackson testified to the truth of the speaker's guess.

In the cabin the three scouts stretched themselves upon the benches spread upon the floor, and soon were in the land of dreams.

The hour's nap of Boone had lasted some four hours, and the shades of evening were beginning to gather thick about the settlement when the old borderer awoke.

Boone rubbed his eyes and indulged in a prolonged yawn.

"Jerusalem! my eyes feel as if they were full of sticks," he muttered.

Then Boone cast his eyes through the little window that lit up the cabin, to the sky.

"It's late, too, by hooky!" he cried. "It's time for us to be on the look-out for the red devils will probably try to cross the Ohio some time after dark."

Then Boone laid his hand upon Kenton's shoulder.

The scout awoke instantly. His slumber was like the sleep of a cat.

"Time for our scout, Kenton," Boone said.

"All right, I'm on hand, kurnel. Shall I wake Lark?" Kenton asked.

The third one of the scouts was still buried in heavy slumbers.

"Yes, I'll be mad if we go without him, or at least I know I would," said Boone, with a chuckle. The stout-hearted borderer welcomed danger as he would an early friend.

"All right, I'll wake him, then."

Kenton laid his hand upon Lark's shoulder, but the sleeper stirred not.

"Shake him a little," suggested Boone.

Kenton did so, but the sleeping man never stirred.

"He's laying himself right down to it, ain't he?" said Boone, with a dry humor in his voice.

"Hain't we better go without him?" asked Kenton.

"Try once more. He's the soundest sleeper that I ever did see," Boone said.

Again Kenton shook the sleeping man, and this time violently, but the effort was useless; Lark never moved.

Kenton bent over and examined him.

"He ain't a-breathin' right," the scout said, in some little alarm.

"Has he got another fit?" asked Boone, quickly.

"Well, it looks like it. His teeth are clenched together, and he's breathing like a quarter-horse."

Boone knelt by Kenton's side and bent over Lark.

A moment's examination convinced Boone that there was something the matter with his companion.

Lark's breath came thick and hard.

"Another spell, by thunder!" muttered Boone, as, with Kenton, he bent over the unconscious man.

Then, suddenly, as though moved by some secret spring, Lark's eyes opened. He stared into the faces of the two that bent over him, but his eyes were like eyes of glass; there was no life therein.

Like men in a trance, Boone and Kenton gazed into the white face and the great, staring eyes.

There was something in the face that seemed to chill the very blood coursing in their veins.

For a moment Lark stared with meaningless eyes at the two, and then, fixed as statues, horrified, they knew not at what, returned the look.

Then, with a sudden start, and apparently with the strength of a giant playing in his muscles, Lark sprang to his feet.

As he rose, he came in violent contact with Boone and Kenton, and the sudden shock hurried them to the floor as though they had been two children.

When he had gained his feet, Lark cast a rapid glance around him, passed his hand mechanically across his forehead, and then, with a stealthy step, like unto a wild beast crawling in upon its prey, he left the cabin.

For a moment Boone and Kenton, seated upon the floor where they had fallen, looked at each other in speechless astonishment.

"If he ain't mad, I'm a catfish!" cried Kenton.

"Let's foller him; he may do some one a mischief!" exclaimed Boone. Then, with eager haste, they followed Lark.

his desire for war, he was compelled to remain inactive.

The wily sachem knew full well that he could accomplish nothing unless he came down upon his foes in overwhelming numbers.

Ke-ne-ha-ha had faced the deadly fire of the white rifles on many a bloody field. He had felt the prowess of the hardy bordermen, and had learned to respect it. No hot-headed boy was he, to rashly dare the power of the white-skinned warriors without a force far superior to their own.

And so he waited, and while he waited—furious as the angry bear cheated of his prey—he called down the curses of the Great Spirit upon the heads of the slow-moving chiefs, his allies.

He paced restlessly up and down the narrow confines of his wigwam.

The chiefs of the Wyandots and the Mingoes are like turtles; they should have houses on their backs. A warrior should be like the eagle or the hawk—swift as the forked light of the Great Spirit. The white-skinned must know that the red-men will soon take the war-path against them. The great chief, Boone, has long ears. Like a fox he crept into the Shawnee village; he will carry back to his people the news that the red warriors are arming for the fight."

The meditations of the chief were interrupted by the entrance of his daughter, Le-a-pah.

The features of the chieftain softened as he looked upon the handsome face of his only child.

"May Le-a-pah speak with her father, the great chief?" asked the girl, with a timid smile.

"The heart of the father is always open to the words of his child," replied the chief, drawing the little form of the girl to him as he spoke, and smoothing back the dark masses of her hair from her low forehead.

"Will my father be angry if Le-a-pah speaks straight?" and the girl looked shyly into her father's face as she spoke.

"Let my daughter speak; the chief will not be angry at his singing-bird, because her tongue is not forked," said Le-a-pah, tenderly.

"My father is the great chief of the Shawnee nation; will my father be angry if his child has looked upon a young brave with loving eyes?"

An earnest look the chief cast into his daughter's face.

"The singing-bird wishes to leave her father, then?"

"Did not the mother of the singing-bird leave her father when she came to sing in the lodge of the great chief?" the maiden asked, shyly.

"My daughter speaks straight. It is the course of nature. The leaf falls from the tree and seeks the embrace of the earth. What is the name of the chief in whose wigwam Le-a-pah would sing?"

"He is only a young brave," began the girl, timidly.

"Youth is not a crime," interrupted the chief, "nor would I give my child to a brave whose hairs are like the snow in color. Spring should not sit in the lap of Winter, else her blood will be chilled into ice—it is bad."

"The young brave is not yet a great warrior, but he has a heart as big as a bear, and no white plume is bound up in his scalp-locks. He will be a great chief when years come heavy upon his head," said the girl, cheered by the encouraging words of the great chief.

"Let my daughter speak his name, and then Ke-ne-ha-ha will know how to answer," said the father.

"He is called the White Dog," and then the girl gazed anxiously into her father's face, but the face of the chief was like a face of marble; not a muscle moved as the name of his daughter's lover fell from her lips.

Even the keen womanly instinct of Le-a-pah, now made doubly keen by the fires of love burning so intensely in her bosom, could not detect whether her father was pleased or displeased.

"The young warrior that captured the great white fighting-man, Boone?" said the chief, slowly.

The heart of the girl leaped for joy; she thought the speech of her father an omen of good.

"Yes," she replied, joyously, and the warm blood leaped freely into her cheeks.

"The young brave is very young," said the chief, gravely. But the heart of the girl could not be deceived. Her heart had told her that her father approved of her choice.

"Le-a-pah is young too," replied the girl.

"The chief is new on the war-path."

"Yet, alone he grappled with the great white hunter, and brought him to the earth. What other red-warrior has ever done the like?"

A grim smile crept over the stern features of the chief as he listened to the unanswerable words of the girl.

"My daughter is as wise as the fox—she speaks for her lover as stoutly as the she-wolf fights for her young."

"The great chief is not angry at Le-a-pah because she speaks for the man she loves?"

"No, it is the blood of Ke-ne-ha-ha running in the veins of Le-a-pah that bids her speak."

"My father then will give his consent that the young chief shall claim Le-a-pah as his own?"

"Ke-ne-ha-ha will then be alone in the world. The Red Arrow, his eldest joy, lies beneath the big oaks that sway their leafy branches in the woods of the Scioto valley. It is the will of the Great Spirit—the chief will not murmur at it."

"Then Le-a-pah may go and sing in the lodge of the young warrior, and make glad his heart?" asked the girl, her heart swelling with joy.

"Yes—on one condition," replied the chief.

"And what is that?" asked the girl, puzzled.

"The chief must first know. If he accepts the condition and performs the service asked, then Le-a-pah shall be his wife, and Ke-ne-ha-ha will himself give her into his hands."

The look of joy upon the face of the girl amply repaid the father for his kindly words.

"Ke-ne-ha-ha too is growing old. In years to come he will be too old to lead the Shawnee warriors to battle. His feet will be feeble upon the war-path and his sight will be dim. The Shawnees will select a new chief to lead them. Who so fit as the son-in-law of their old sachem, if Ke-ne-ha-ha lifts up his voice in his favor?"

The heart of the girl beat high with pride as she listened to the words of her father and thought of the future that looked so bright before her.

"Le-a-pah can not speak as she would, for her heart is too full."

"Let my daughter send the young chief to me. Ke-ne-ha-ha will tell him of the service that he must attempt in order to win the flower of the Shawnee tribe."

"It is a service of danger?" and a look of anxious fear swept over her dark face.

"If the flower is not worth the winning, no chieftain's hand shall ever pluck it from the parent stem," replied the father.

"The young brave will face a thousand deaths, Le-a-pah will pledge her life to it," said the girl, promptly, and then she left the wigwam.

In a few minutes the young warrior who aspired to the hand of the great chieftain's daughter stood within the lodge of the great chief.

Ke-ne-ha-ha cast a searching glance into the frank and open face of the young Indian.

Therein he saw written both courage and skill.

"The young brave would have the daughter of Ke-ne-ha-ha to sing in his wigwam?"

"The chief speaks straight," replied the young warrior, firmly.

"The love of a pure girl is priceless; no treasure like it on the earth; it is the greatest blessing that Manitou ever gave to his red children. What will the young warrior give or do to win the singing-bird?"

"He will give his life for Le-a-pah; do all possible things. Let the chief speak—tell of the service that he wishes the young warrior to do," said the Shawnee, promptly.

For a moment Ke-ne-ha-ha looked into the face of the young brave as though pondering upon the words that he was about to speak.

The warrior waited anxiously, impatient to know of the deed that he must do to win the girl that he loved so fondly.

"The chief has heard of the Wolf Demon?" asked Ke-ne-ha-ha.

"Yes," replied the warrior, and a look of dread crept over his face as he heard the name of the terrible scourge of the Shawnee nation.

"The paws of the Wolf Demon are red with the blood of my people. Many Shawnee warriors have fallen by the tomahawk of this terrible being. On their breasts he cuts his totem—a Red Arrow. Does the chief know why the totem of the Demon is a Red Arrow?"

"No," the warrior replied.

"The Red Arrow was the eldest daughter of Ke-ne-ha-ha—the sister of Le-a-pah. She left her tribe to dwell in the wigwam of a white stranger. Ke-ne-ha-ha followed and struck to the death the false girl who forsaken her tribe. He killed also the white skin. The dead white was eaten up by a wolf, but the soul of the white-skin lived. It ate up the soul of the animal, and the beast became the Wolf Demon—a Wolf with a human soul. The Wolf Demon can be killed. Ke-ne-ha-ha has grappled with him. He did not clutch air but substance. The human wolf can be struck to the death if the blow be given rightly."

"The words of the great chief opened the eyes of the young brave. He guessed what the service was that the Shawnee chieftain wished at his hands."

"Let the great chief speak of the deed that must be done to win the hand of Le-a-pah."

"The human wolf can be killed—"

"Yes."

"Let my young brave try to kill the Wolf Demon. If he draws one drop of blood from the scourge of the Shawnees, he shall have the daughter of Ke-ne-ha-ha."

A look of fierce determination settled upon the face of the young warrior.

"The Shawnee warrior accepts the offer," he said, firmly. "He will seek for the Wolf Demon in the woods. He will search for him as the panther searches for the red chief that steals his cub. If mortal hands can take the life of the Shawnee terror, then he shall fall by the knife of the White Dog."

"It is good," cried Ke-ne-ha-ha, and a look of satisfaction came over his face. "Let the young warrior perform the service and the great chief of the Shawnee nation will give him his child."

The White Dog will seek the Wolf Demon at once."

Then the warrior turned upon his heel and left the wigwam.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DEATH OR FREEDOM.

WHILE the great Shawnee chieftain was stating to the anxious lover the condition that covered the gift of his daughter's hand, another strange life drama was being enacted in the Indian village.

Kendrick—the renegade—and his daughter—the Kenawake Queen—stood together by the wigwam that held in its confines the helpless prisoner, Virginia Treveling.

Before the door of the lodge sat a brawny Shawnee brave, placed there by Girty to watch the prisoner.

The dark-browed renegade had taken ample measures to hold his victim, securely, in his power.

First, Kate guarded the prisoner; second, the Indian warrior kept ward and watch.

No thought of the prisoner's escape ever crossed the mind of Girty. He too, like the Shawnee chieftain, Ke-ne-ha-ha, chafed at the delay of the expedition against the whites.

The renegade was fully as eager as his red brother for the banquet of blood. He longed to see the smoke of the burning dwellings cloud the face of the sky, and to wet his knife in the warm life-blood.

Kendrick had just explained to his daughter the reasons that led to the delay of the expedition.

Kate listened attentively, her brain busy in thought.

"And when will the expedition move?" she asked.

"That's dubious, gal," he answered. "It all depends upon the Wyandots and the Mingoes. When they send their warriors, then we kin go ahead, but not till then."

"And my plan, father, to remove this girl from my path?"

"You had better carry it out right away," said the renegade, after thinking for a moment.

"That'll be no better chance than at the present. I owe Girty a little balance, which I reckon this affair will settle. Instead of staying with his own tribe, the Wyandots, he's been sneakin' round hyer with the Shawnee. If it goes on, he'll have more influence hyer than I have, and I ain't a-goin' to stand that, now."

So, gal, if you want any help to snake the gal out of his clutches, I'm the critter for to give it to you, and no mistake."

"I may need your aid, father," said the girl, thoughtfully.

"All right, you kin have it. I'd do most anything to spite him."

"I think that it will be better to carry the girl off to-night. He may place her in some safer place to-morrow."

"Jest so, gal, no tellin'; he's as suspicious as a crow. It will worry him some to lose the gal," said Kendrick, with a grin.

"But the Indian sentry before the door of the wigwam?" and, with her eyes, Kate indicated the brawny warrior, who, seated before the lodge-door, was smoking a rude pipe, fashioned from a corn-stalk, with great satisfaction.

"Oh, I kin fix him easy 'nough," replied Kendrick.

"Then I will make the attempt at once," said Kate, decidedly.

"I'll fix the Injun. You go into the lodge. I'll talk to the chief and get him to leave his post for a moment. When he's gone, I'll cough; then, you slip out of the lodge with the gal and take to the timber. It ain't likely that they will be apt to discover that the gal is gone till morning."

"And by that time it will make very little difference whether it is discovered or not," said Kate, meaningly.

"Are you going to kill the gal?" asked Kendrick, speaking as coolly and as unconcerned as though it was the killing of some worthless beast that he referred to.

"Why should I let her live?" asked Kate,

sercely. "Is she not loved by the man whom I love better than I do any one else in this world?"

"But if you leave her hyer with Girty—"

"May she not escape from him?"

"That's true; but dead—"

"She can not return."

"That's true ag'in."

"Once in the forest, dead, a prey to the wolves, she never more will rival me."

"Wal, I don't know but what I like it better that way myself. I'll worry Girty, and that will jest suit me," said Kendrick, thoughtfully.

"I'll enter the wigwam at once and prepare the girl."

"And after you go in I'll tackle the Injun. I've got an idea for to get shot of him. When I cough, you'll know that he's out of the way, and that you kin fetch the little gal out."

So, without further words, Kate left her father and entered the lodge. Kendrick waited until she was fairly inside, and then he walked, leisurely, to the Indian on guard and sat down by his side.

The brawny chief acknowledged the approach of the renegade with a nod of recognition.

"Ain't this kinder dull work for my brother?" asked the renegade.

"Ugh!" and the Indian gave vent to a grunt of dissatisfaction.

"You'd rather be on the war-path ag'in the white-skins along the Ohio than to be hyer, a-keepin' watch over a squaw?"

"My brother speaks straight," said the Indian, in a surly tone, taking the pipe from his lips for a moment.

"Big pity," replied the chief, sentimentally. "My brother thinks much of his Wyandot brother, Girty?" said Kendrick, in a tone of question.

"His Wyandot brother is a great warrior," replied the chief, evidently not willing to commit himself by a decided answer.

"Wal, I judged that you thought a heap of hyer by being willing for to do his watchin', hyer," said Kendrick, suggestively.

"Girty is a great Wyandot chief, but the Shawnee brave is not his watch-dog for love. The chief does a service, but the chief will be paid for it."

"Oho!" muttered Kendrick to himself, "I reckon I know how the chief is a-goin' to be paid."

"My brother knows now that the Shawnee is to be paid for his service," said the Indian.

"No more than right," said Kendrick, heartily. "I heard the other day that Girty got some corn-juice from a flat-boat that he captivated on the Ohio."

"Wal, it is good. The Shawnee brave is to have corn-juice in payment of his service."

"Wal, corn-juice ain't bad to take when it's good," said Kendrick, reflectively.

"It is good," replied the warrior, decidedly.

"I wish that my wigwam wasn't so far off," said Kendrick, with a sly look into the Indian's bronzed features as he spoke.

"Why does my brother wish that?" asked the chief.

"Wal, I feel thirsty, and I've got some of the best corn-juice that you ever seed in my wigwam, and I'm too 'tarnal lazy to go after it."

"It is bad," said the warrior, slowly, looking askance at the renegade.

"If my brother did not have to watch the wigwam he could go for the corn-juice and we would drink it together."

"My brother speaks straight."

"I'm sorry that the chief can not go—"

"Why can not the chief go?" asked the Indian, within whose breast there had sprung up a strong desire to taste the precious fire-water of the renegade.

"Is he not watching the wigwam for his Wyandot brother, Girty?"

"Can not the Shawnee chief go for the fire-water, and leave his Shawnee brother to watch the lodge?" asked the Indian.

"Of course this was exactly what the shrewd renegade wished."

"My brother is as wise as the fox."

The Indian bowed at the compliment.

"Will my Shawnee brother go for the fire-water and leave me to watch the lodge?"

"My brother speaks good. The chief will go," and the Indian rose to his feet.

"The chief will find the corn-juice under a blanket near the door of the lodge."

The Indian bowed gravely, and departed.

"He'd smell it out, anyway," muttered Kendrick, "leave a red-skin alone for finding whisky, if there's any around. They go for it quick as a con eel for a tail tree when the dogs are arter him. Now I'll jest warn Kate, so that she will know that the coast is clear."

I reckon Girty will swear some when he finds that the gal has broke for tall timber," and the renegade chuckled in glee.

His fit of laughter over, he looked about him, carefully. No one was in sight; so he cautiously gave the signal agreed upon between Kate and himself.

A few moments after the sound of the cough died away on the night air, Kate came, cautiously from the wigwam, followed by Virginia.

"All right, gal," said the renegade, quickly.

"The Injun, out of the way, but don't let grass grow under your feet between hyer and the Ohio. They may discover that you've cut your stick any moment."

"Do not worry, father; I know every foot of the ground between here and the river," replied the girl, a strange nervousness patent in her voice. "Come, lady, do not fear; before this night is over, you shall be free from danger."

"That ain't much danger in the grave," muttered the renegade between his teeth.

Then Kate led the way into the wood, and Virginia followed without a word.

The renegade watched them until the dark shadows of the forest closed around them and they were hid from his view.

"I reckon my little gal will fix her," muttered the renegade, in a tone of satisfaction.

Then a thought flashed suddenly across his mind. With a sudden spring he leaped to his feet.

"By all the imps below, I never thought

THE TALE OF A TAILOR.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

Some fourteen hundred thousand
Little years ago,
A tailor loved Miss Jean; his name
Was Mr. So-and-so.

"My dear," said he, "it seems to me
You are an angel fair;
And oh, the love I bear for you,
Is warranted to wear."

"You are a grease-spot on my mind
That never will remove;
My heart indeed would be of frock
If you did not love."

"In Cupid's conterie I move;
To you my spirit leans;
Though fortune called me far away
My heart is always Jean's."

"My love it binds me unto you;
And I will give my oath
I am not making up a lie
To-day out of whole cloth."

But oh, the maid declined his suit—
"I throw," she answered,
"That you're a pantaloonatic;
So don't talk sew to me!"

This was the kindest cut of all;
His suit had proved a sack;
He took to writing poetry,
His measures hope did lack.

He saw he could not collar wife,
His heart grew very sear;
Ground his in-sensibles all day long,
And occasionally swore.

He quickly lost his appetite;
For cabbage had no eye;
Refused to dine from fashion-plates,
And then resolved to die.

He drove ten thousand needles straight
Into his mortal breast;
Made a needle-cushion of himself—
And mould on him was pressed.

Strange Stories.

THE BURIED TREASURE.
A NEW ENGLAND LEGEND.

BY AGILE PENNE.

In the town of Branford, Connecticut, close to the shore washed by the waters of Long Island Sound, lived Ethan Sneed, a retired merchant.

Sneed was a man of large property, and something of a miser in his disposition.

A single child only called him father; a young and beautiful girl.

Naturally Abigail Sneed did not want for lovers, as she was not only young, charming in face and form, blessed with an excellent disposition, but was also the heiress of her father's wealth.

In regard to the suitors of the heiress, it was the old story repeated, her father had chosen the son of a rich neighbor, who was heir not only to his father's wealth, but to his sturdy manners and chivalric habits, while the bright-eyed girl had, with all of youth's willfulness, fixed her affections upon a young and handsome captain of a fishing-smack that sailed from Stony Creek.

Reuben Dedham owned little in the world besides the Pearl, as the little fishing sloop was named, and a poor three acres of ground, whereon stood the cottage where his mother lived. But Reuben was stout of limb and fair in face; a bronzed sea-master, who had been bred from boyhood to the roaring main and who knew not the meaning of the word fear. Old Sneed had told the young sailor, promptly and plumply, that his daughter was not for him.

Abigail had cried until her eyes were red, for she dared not disobey her father, much as she loved young Reuben, and the captain of the fishing smack had hoisted sail and passed to sea on a trip for profit beyond the frowning Thimble Islands.

Old Sneed felt rejoiced when he saw the white sail of the Pearl bend to the breeze, and gazed upon the foamy wake the little vessel left behind her. He feared a lover's prayers and a maiden's powers of resistance.

Then, as the day was mild and the waters calm, old Sneed hurried down to the water's edge, entered his boat, took the oars and put to sea.

To all his neighbors—and there were not many folks in Branford at the time we write of, the year 1760—it was a mystery why old Sneed spent so much time in his boat paddling around the Thimble Islands, but some wise heads shrewdly suspected that the old miser had heard the story of the buried treasure of Kid, the pirate, who but a short time before had been hung from the fore-yard-arm of one of his majesty's ships.

The story went that Kid was wont to rendezvous upon one of the Thimble group, and that he buried vast stores of treasure in some secret spot upon the island.

Of course the treasure had been sought for, but without avail.

The suspicion of the gossips was correct. Night and day thoughts of the buried treasure of the bloody pirate, Robert Kid, were ever in the mind of the miser.

By day he thought of the vast sum of broad Spanish gold-pieces, wrested from the galleons of the south, that the pirate was reputed to have hidden in the bosom of old mother earth, and by night, in his dreams, he looked upon great heaps of glittering gems, worthy to gladden the diadem of an eastern king, that the remorseless robber had stolen from lordly knight and gentle lady upon the bosom of the rolling ocean.

If he could only discover the hiding-place of the treasure, no monarch on earth could compare with him, a New World prince, in wealth. So old Sneed rowed from island to island, carefully seeking on each one for traces of the buried treasure.

One island, by common report, had been designated as the one where the treasure had been buried, and a little sandy bay had received the title of Kid's Harbor.

Old Sneed was not a firm believer in this theory, though, that the pirate had buried his treasure on Money Island, but thought it more likely that the crafty villain would have sought one of the lesser islands as a treasure house, rather than the one to which he commonly resorted.

Sneed's search so far had proved a fruitless one, and, as he dipped the oars in the shimmering water, he watched the bright drops falling back to the parent flood, and wondered if the buried jewels of the pirate were larger than they.

Mentally he regretted that he did not know where to procure one of the famous divining-rods, which were said to be infallible in designating the hiding-place of buried treasures.

If he could only get his hands upon one of those wonderful rods there was no doubt that it would at once reveal to him the exact spot where the pirate had hidden his ill-gotten wealth.

This day Sneed had resolved to spend in searching the surface of Money Island thoroughly; and, as he pulled up toward the little sandy cove, judge of his dismay when he beheld a boat drawn up beyond the reach of the tide upon the beach.

A horrible suspicion seized upon him. What if the stranger or strangers, who had come in the boat, had discovered the pirate's treasure? With wonderful nimbleness for one so old as Sneed, he forced his boat up on the beach, jumped out, drew it up beyond the reach of the waves, and ran up upon the rocky ledge beyond the cove.

As he had expected, there were strangers upon the island. Two men, bending low to the ground, were watching a peeled wand of the wood commonly termed Witch Hazel, which was curiously balanced upon a forked stick.

Regardless of all consequences, old Sneed hurried down toward the strangers. If they had discovered the treasure, he was bound to have a share, even at the risk of his life.

The men looked like sailors; one was old and the other young. They started in surprise when they beheld Sneed, and clapped their hands beneath the heavy jackets that they wore, as if in search of weapons.

Then, for the first time, Sneed realized the danger of his position.

But after the strangers had taken a good look at old Sneed, who was now thoroughly frightened and wished that he was safe back again to the main land, their bearing changed. By old Neptune, this is the very man! the elder of the two strangers cried.

"So it is!" replied the other.

Sneed was astonished at the recognition, and knew not what to make of it.

"Holla, messmate!" cried the first stranger, "can you guess what we're after?"

"Kid's treasures, I suppose," replied Sneed, who began to gain courage, perceiving that the strangers had not discovered any thing.

"Right, by hooky!" exclaimed the old sailor, in a tone of wonder. "Harkye, messmate, we'll do the fair thing by you, for you are the only man who can get the pirate's treasure, and that in his hands the rod would work. Now, mate, we want to act honest; if you'll work the rod, we'll give you one-half."

"No, no, I must have two-thirds!" cried Sneed who saw that he had the best of the bargain.

After some expostulation, which failed to move the miser a jot from his way, the two sailors consented.

"Now, let me try!" cried Sneed, trembling with excitement.

"No, mate, no use till midnight!" the sailor replied. "We'll start on the island, you can go home and then come back."

To this Sneed strongly objected; he was not going to leave the island until the treasure was discovered. Besides, it was already late in the afternoon, and it would not be many hours to midnight.

Then the sailor suggested that Sneed's household would become alarmed at his prolonged absence and search for him.

Sneed at once explained that his daughter had gone to New Haven to visit a friend and would not return for three days, and that the neighbors would be apt to think that he had gone with her, and assuredly would not trouble themselves to look for him.

So that all agreed that it was better that Sneed should wait.

Darkness came; Sneed never felt a bit hungry, for he could think of nothing but the treasure which would soon be his.

The old sailor calculated the hours by the moon which rose at eleven, and when twelve o'clock came, Sneed tried the magic wand, and it pointed to almost the same spot where the sailors had thought of digging.

Sneed grabbed the spade and set to work. The moment the iron entered the ground, the sailors yelled in affright, cried out that they saw a ghost, pushed Sneed over on his face, and ran down to the beach, jumped one in each boat, and pulled lustily away, leaving Sneed alone on the island without means of getting off. In vain he implored the strangers to return. In five minutes they were out of sight and hearing. Then Sneed returned to dig for the treasure. Six inches down he struck it, and he pointed to almost the same spot where the sailors had thought of digging.

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"From who, dear? I beg you to tell me," and Retta sprang up from her reclining position, a white pallor settling all over her face.

"Why, what is the matter, Retta? You are surely faint—and I don't wonder, the way you lay awake nights, and the miserable breakfasts you take. Will you have my salts?"

She arose to reach for them, but Retta interposed her hand.

"Oh, no! I am not at all ill. Am I pale? Go on with what we were talking about."

"Oh, yes," returned Una, "it was of marriage, and I imagined—only for a moment, you know—that you would faint because you thought I was going to say I wouldn't have anybody but Owen Kinneligh—that charming Welsh gentleman, you remember. Oh, isn't he splendid, isn't he? Retta! what is the matter? I shall ring for pa at once."

"Please don't; wait just a minute and I will tell you."

Miss Geoffrey's words were low and sweet as they always were; but Una heard the burden of anguish they carried, just as plainly as she saw the same grief in her wistful eyes.

"I am very weak and unwomanly, I fear," she said, after a moment; "but I never hear his name without just such emotion. Oh, Una! Una! how I worshiped Owen Kinneligh once! And I never dreamed you would care for him."

Una gazed in amazement at the white face, and the pale lips that uttered the quick, passionate words; and then a bright flush began to encircle her own face. She knelt down beside the lounge, and wound her arms around Miss Geoffrey's neck.

"Retta, I see it all now—all the sleepless nights, the untasted meals, the weeping of your dear eyes when you thought I didn't know; all that Owen Kinneligh! Retta, and the voice sunk to a murmur, 'does he love you?'"

"How can I tell?" she returned, almost angrily. "He said so, and then, because I—because we quarreled—he went away and left me. And for a long year I have never seen or heard of him. You call the summer 'long and weary'; what think you it is to me?"

Una, for reply, curled and caressed the tiny spires of hair that lay like jetty tendrils on Retta's white forehead. Then, after a long, long silence, she broke out:

"Retta, darling, I will forget Owen Kinneligh, and you shall forget what I said. And now, help me decide on my summer's escapade—for a jolly escapade I am determined it shall be."

A spacious bedroom, over whose two western windows climbed vagrant honeysuckle vines, that perfumed with such subtle sweetness the air that stirred the white dimity curtains, and gently rustled the sides of the old-fashioned patch-work quilt, that covered the high four-poster bed, a wide strip of home-made carpet lay laid beside the bed; a similar piece in front of the cherry washstand, which, with the tiny glass that hung over it did double duty for toilette stand and dressing-case.

A Boston rocking-chair was invitingly urging one to occupy it beside one shady window, and as Mrs. Olmstead, the thrifty farmer's wife, showed the "new girl" her clean, sweet, contrived bedroom, and left her to don street working attire before she descended to the kitchen, and went down stairs herself, the remarkably self-possessed help settled herself in that chair with a grace and dignity very unlike "Annie Smith," but had Harry Gregory, or Mr. Owen Kinneligh happened to have been about, they would have said very like "Miss Una Penrose." And, Miss Una Penrose it veritably was, actually launched on that "jolly escapade" of hers; positively "hired out" for not less than a month to Mrs. Olmstead, who kept the select boarding-house at "Sunset Light" for the few permanent, and numerous transient guests who honored it.

That is, you would have been astonished at the equally provoking likeness and unlikeness; you would be just about tempted to speak to her and say, "Miss Penrose! Is it possible?" and then, a second searching glance and a sparkle of anger from her blue eyes, and you would bow, and stammer, and mutter something about "craving Miss Annie's pardon; but really the resemblance was so pointed," etc., etc. She sat looking out over the broad meadow, covered with short, sweet pasture, at the wide-spreading "weeping oaks," that waved and swayed with such matchless grace as the wind swept softly over it; at the vast stretch of timber-land, that bounded the landscape like emeralds incasing a choicer gem, and over, and around, and above all, at the hills that towered in a soft, blue-gray haze that lent sweeter enchantment to the shadows, chasing the sunlight from wooded base to peak.

And Una felt the silent voices of Nature communing with her as never before, even though she had stood on the Pacific shore, and picked up an old Albatross's nest, when, from Jungfrau she had watched the sun come up, and on the top of Mount Washington watched it go down. Then she was the desirable Miss Penrose, the heiress, the beauty, whose walk, manner, dress, conversation were mimicked by lesser lights; now—this with a swelling exuberance of joy in her heart—now she was going to drink deep at the same fountain of joy that humans less favored than herself had been quaffing from. What would she taste in her cup? What would come of all this?

But she began to dress herself for her new duties, and her thoughts took wing for the present—except two separate and distinct ones that darted across her mind and away. She wondered whether, when she went back to Retta Geoffrey, when the harvest moon should shine, there would be news—good news concerning Owen Kinneligh? And then, with a delicious blush on her cheek, as she reproached herself for caring, if only a wee while, for the man Retta worshipped so, Una vowed to never think of him again—and she did miss Harry Gregory more than she could have imagined possible. Those splendid mischievous eyes of his, that had looked such maddening things in her own—wouldn't they sparkle at the sight of her as she looked now, so demurely sweet and enchantingly plain, in her brown and white calico dress, green gingham apron, and with her hair brushed plainly off her temples and confined in a net?

Harry was a real nice fellow, anyhow, only—then a bell rung somewhere from the regions below, and as Una imagined it certainly was a summons for her, she started down, on this "jolly escapade" of hers.

"It certainly is a remarkable coincidence, to say the least. It is the strongest resemblance I ever saw."

Mr. Owen Kinneligh recrossed his legs on the piazza railing, and slowly blew smoke-wreaths from under a luxuriant white moustache, while his head, crowned to perfection by the masses of dark gray hair that curled loosely against his neck and brow, leaned directly against the pillar of the porch which directed the honeysuckle vines to Annie Smith's bedroom.

"The likeness is singularly strange, as you say, Kinneligh. And I think the compliment is equally applicable to either lady—for this

neat, deft-handed maid-of-all-work is a lady by birth and breeding, if Fate has placed her in Mrs. Olmstead's kitchen."

How Una's heart throbbed—there, we may as well confess that she was sitting in her rocking-chair by the window when this conversation began between the two men, who, of all the world, had come to Mrs. Olmstead's for a fortnight's quiet relaxation.

They had been there a day or so already, and after Harry Gregory and Owen Kinneligh had expressed their mutual delight and surprise at thus meeting, their next subject of conversation had been—Annie Smith.

And Una—when she caught a first glance of the two coming up from the boat-landing, felt her heart leap with mingled astonishment, delight, and agitation. Her cheeks had reddened so that Mrs. Olmstead had asked her what was the matter. Ah! Una would hardly admit to herself that she had learned something very curious and delightful since she commenced masquerading.

One new lesson was—and if more girls could learn it, the better it would be for them—that it would not be such a terrible thing after all to become the wife of a poor man—like Harry Gregory, for instance; whom—this was the second secret lesson—she had begun to love very dearly.

And so, with sparkling eyes, and bounding pulse, she listened to hear these two men discuss "Annie Smith."

"Yes, she is a gentlewoman, undoubtedly," added Mr. Kinneligh, "and it is her name that puzzles me more than her face. I wonder what Miss Penrose would say to see this double of hers? I'd give a good deal to see them together."

Then Harry's voice, in a mischievous laugh, floated up with the fragrance of the honeysuckles.

"I wonder if Miss Annie would be more kind to a fellow than Miss Penrose was? I declare, Kinneligh, I won't be able to eat a mouthful of this Hebe in calico waits on table much longer."

"But I thought you were entirely devoted to Miss Penrose, Harry! I thought—"

"Hush, please do not speak seriously of that. I am heart sore yet on that point. To-night I'd give ten years off my life if she'd let me love her."

His voice had suddenly lost its gaiety, and as well as if she had seen it.

"You can't depend on women, Gregory, and, though nobody in the world would imagine it, I tell you my life is a waste through the falsity of the one woman I ever did or shall care a rush for. And I suppose she is happy and unconscious of what she has done to me."

"But I'm sure if Una once loved she'd never—"

And she knew by the decreasing sound that the two were walking away beyond hearing.

Once, just outside the lawn gate, Kinneligh spoke.

"Well, when Miss Penrose returns home from her tour of visiting, she may prove kinder."

"Why, is she from home? Since when? Where did she go? If I thought I would meet her anywhere—"

"Don't follow her up, Harry. Where did she go? Well, nobody knows exactly, only on her own sweet will."

Gradually a light began to beam in Harry's eyes; then a smile, first of amusement, then of a deeper feeling, parted his lips. But he smoked on in silence as they walked slowly along the river bank.

"Miss Smith!"

Una stopped suddenly on her way from the parlor, where she had been arranging fresh flowers, to meet Harry Gregory's eyes looking at her.

"You—you spoke to me, sir?"

She was so angry to think her speech faltered so.

"To you, or to Miss Una Penrose, whichever you chooses to answer me."

He was close beside her now, enjoying her confusion.

"You can't deny it, Una!—Miss Penrose, I mean."

"Oh, Mr. Gregory, I never thought you'd find it out. And I was having such a good time!"

When she pouted so prettily, he was enchanted. Girls don't pout when they are angry with their lovers—it's only when they want to try them a little.

"But I shall spoil all this good time if you'll let me. Una! Una! if you only knew how delighted I was to find you—if I only might keep you forever and forever."

He had both her hands now, and was looking straight in her eyes—he had a great way of looking people in the eyes when he talked.

Una drew a long breath, then glanced up at him, with such sweet shyness on her face.